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THE
PURPOSE OF GOD

JOSEPH SMITH DODGE D.D.

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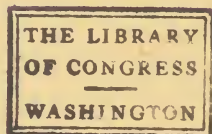
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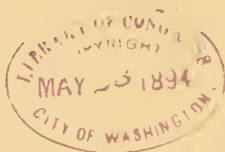
THE
PURPOSE OF GOD.

"That God may be all in all."



BY

JOSEPH SMITH DODGE, A.M., M.D., D.D,



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PREFACE.

THIS book is an attempt to present in orderly form those views of divine and human relations which, during a hundred years, have been developing in the Universalist Church. There are, doubtless, many forms of statement in it which will seem new to Universalists, and some conclusions which will not be readily accepted. But it is believed that every one of these grows logically out of ideas which are acknowledged by all; and that the surprise or the dissent will be only such as we always experience when our vague beliefs are reduced to accurate statements and their inevitable corollaries set before us.

But the book is not offered to this church alone. If the Universalist consciousness were not part of the general Christian consciousness, if it had not roots extending through all the past ages, and affiliations with the spiritual life of all Christendom, it would be worth no man's while to elaborate or defend it. The author assumes to speak to the whole Church, believing that the system of thought here suggested —

crudely, no doubt, as a first attempt — marks the position towards which all the best thinking of the Church is tending. The divine method here presented does not permit us to suppose any abrupt change, any future not evolved from the past; and the author imagines that he sees in much of the thinking of the past a feeling after such conceptions as are here offered.

No apology is made for the omission of much which the reader might expect to find. The effort has been to set forth the comprehensive scheme with as little elaboration of detail as might be consistent with clearness of view; and to comprise all within a volume of unforbidding size.

A constant effort has been made to avoid controversy, not as in itself objectionable or permanently avoidable, but as tending to obscure a first statement. And to this effort may be charged the omission of some things and the light touch given to others. In short, if the reader carries away from this book the one fundamental conception on which it is based, he will have all the author designs to give.

NOVEMBER, 1893.

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God will be All in All.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

I.

GOD IN THE WORLD.

MAN is at once the product and the master of the world. At every point he is closely allied with his surroundings; and yet some of his peculiarities—his size, his anatomical structure, his length of life, his power of adaptation to all climates and all foods—give him an immense advantage, which his mental endowments raise to an easy and immeasurable mastery. Therefore we find him, at whatever stage of culture, using for his own ends the objects and forces of nature which surround him. But he does not at any stage do this as a foreign master. He is native to his state, and acts upon the world from within the world, and with constant reaction of the world upon himself. This gives rise to a continual forward movement, a development of both man and the world; for under his hand new resources continually come to light in answer to his progressive demands, and this in such increasing ratio, that both the

scientific and the popular mind have come to doubt whether man can develop any legitimate need for which nature has not a supply; while, on the other hand, his own development keeps pace with that which is thus produced in nature, and his demands forever rise. Out of this increasing action and reaction all the history of man's life has been evolved; and it is not easy at first sight to decide whether the conditions of his physical environment have influenced the development of man, or his increasing mastery of the world has modified these conditions, in the larger degree.

Nor is this a recent movement only. As far back as we can trace man's life, the same interaction between him and nature is found. Indeed, there is no known condition of man, not even the rudest savagery or the remotest indications of his prehistoric days, in which he is not noticeable before all else for his attempts to control his surroundings, and for at least a partial success. We have no knowledge and no guess of any human existence not involved in this perpetual commerce with nature.

When, however, we follow back the history of the physical world, the case seems at first entirely different. Compared with its vast duration, the period of man's existence becomes almost inconsiderable; and nature may be said to have run her career and almost

filled out her days before she was concerned with man. But a closer examination must modify this view. The present state of the earth, so perfectly adapted not to any one human condition, but to all the stages of man's progressive growth, is found to have resulted, without break or sudden change, from the entire sequence of geological history. Step by step the unknown chaos of the beginning has evolved all its successive conditions, till the earth became what we know it. No point can be found which could serve as a commencement without supposing all that went before ; and conversely the present constitution of the earth seems to crown and fulfil all the past as its accomplished aim. Therefore, since the world is so perfectly fitted to human needs, man and man alone is the adequate end towards which the whole vast process points ; and although he came so late upon the scene, yet Nature must be judged to have foreknown her consummate offspring, and to have labored for his coming through all her years.

Other lines of investigation add force to this conclusion. To uncultivated men the surface of nature with which they come in contact seems simple ; but the first attempt at analysis shows that it is very complex. The earlier researches of science seemed to divide the natural field into many different and

almost independent domains; but the deeper study of our day finds all these inseparably united, so that the aggregate of surroundings which we call the world is a unit of innumerable parts and of the greatest complexity, but each portion is necessary to all the rest, and none could be what it is if all the others were not what they are. When, therefore, we find that the total front of nature with which man deals is adapted so perfectly to his wants that it is always ready to answer his new advances with new supplies, and that this is the result of the co-ordination of all nature's departments, we are more than ever impressed with the thought already suggested by geological history. So great a complexity, resulting in so perfect an adaptation to man, and not to man as a constant factor, but to all stages of his advancing life, cannot be an environment to which he has casually adjusted himself, but must be conceived as a premeditated result, having him for its object.

Still another series of facts re-enforces this conclusion. The five or six thousand years of human history of which we have some certain knowledge do not merely show a series of readjustments between man and nature, but they emphatically display a development wrought in man himself as the result of his own volitions combined with the reactions of his environment, which combination constitutes the course

of human events. To the successive stages of this evolution nature has visibly contributed; and not merely as the scene of action, but as often determining by its own processes the course of events. The distribution of land and water, the course of rivers and of mountain chains, drought and pestilence, the varying fertility or sterility of lands and of races, the deposits of minerals, and the connection of foods with climates, have all effected the story of man's life. And since this story is not a jumble of aimless vicissitudes, but presents on the whole a sustained advance in human character and power, the thought becomes irresistible that the constitution and the processes of nature which contribute so much to this result must be the expression of a purpose as ancient as the beginning of material things, and powerful enough to control the world and all its parts.

Now, this point being reached, or only vaguely surmised, a new element enters.

At an early stage in his development man becomes conscious of himself. He knows within himself a power not bodily, by the exertion of which he masters his own physical frame and bends to his purposes the things which surround him. He knows what it is to form a purpose and hold to it through many actions; what it is to assemble resources and

combine them to his determined aim; what it is to supply from within himself the power of will which overcomes all difficulties and issues in success. He is aware, too, that other men have and use the same powers, and he studies their works and acts to determine their aims.

Now, this inner man, looking on the world about him, recognizes, with the sure intuition of like-mindedness, that the world expresses the same qualities of fixed purpose and dominant will which he knows in himself and sees in other men. At a low stage of intelligence he recognizes this fitfully and in isolated results; as his mind broadens, his wider survey gives him a larger conception and a firmer grasp of the same thing; and the height of modern science, besides enlarging this view to embrace the universe, also adds the element of intensity to a degree which augments the force of an entire argument.

For science not only reveals the great complexity of the world, but equally shows the harmony of this complex. The dominant charm of scientific research is not utility, but the fascination of a wonderful harmony, which the mind more and more comprehends, and finds more and more perfect. We tire of the babble of children or fools, and turn away with disgust from unmeaning words or aimless deeds; but the thoughts of the ingenious or the wise attract and hold us with

an educating power. Now, it is the latter and not the former impression which the study of nature and of the course of events makes on serious minds. We confront intelligence which answers more and more profoundly to our questioning, and a wise design beyond all the ingenuity of man; so that the deeper our study, the less are we disposed to imagine that it is we who impose thought upon nature, the more disposed to read, like the humblest pupils, in a book of boundless wisdom.

This study has brought us to the conception of God, and has given us far more than a sacred name or a conventional faith. The conception is of a great Intelligence, which fashioned the world from the first, and has conducted it through all its course, for the purpose of developing man's life, and which commands power so vast as to compass all its ends. This, however, throws no light on the objective point of God's action upon man through nature and life; but there is another line of investigation which does.

Experience has abundantly shown that the established course of nature tends to human welfare on the condition that man co-operate with that order; while, on the other hand, nature steadily opposes, and always thwarts in the end, the efforts of men to act against her laws. Man's contact with nature, there-

fore, subjects him to a constant system of rewards and punishments, which tend powerfully to bring him into harmony with nature's order. Now, since all the order of nature is the expression of God's purpose in nature, and since we have found this purpose directed always towards man, it follows that when man comes into co-operation with the laws of nature, he comes to this extent into harmony with God; and, therefore, the purpose of God, in the ordering of the world, is to bring men into harmony with himself.

But we can add another step to this. The whole action of nature has to do with man's welfare, even the oppositions and hardships of the natural world being a wholesome discipline which instructs and restrains him for his good. And if we do not conceive too narrowly the ideas of human welfare and of man's co-operation with nature, we shall in this direction find our conception of God's purpose greatly enlarged.

The welfare of man reaches from his simplest bodily needs to the highest possibilities of his spirit; and he co-operates with nature or opposes it along this entire range. It is not merely that man adapts himself to climate and food, or establishes the social order which his individual weakness makes necessary; besides such adaptations, the use of his mental and moral qualities lays nature under larger tribute to human welfare. Intelligence and will, industry, patience, and

self-control make man far more the master of his surroundings than strength or passion; and the more elaborate his uses of nature become, the more does his resulting welfare depend on these inward forces. So that when we come to consider the highest level of man's co-operation with nature, that, namely, at which he and his environment combine to produce the course of events, man's contribution to the result is found to be almost wholly spiritual, his physical activity being far surpassed by the brutes or the machines which he controls.

The direct outcome, therefore, of man's interaction with the world is to call forth and exercise his nobler faculties, giving the mind its vast and rightful predominance over the body. And this result is at once an eminent degree of human welfare and the highest possible harmony of man with nature, since in this way man sets himself to govern and use the world by the same powers which its Maker and Ruler employs. Hence the conclusion of our whole inquiry is that the purpose under which God has ordered and conducts the world is that man may be brought into harmony with God by the development of his spiritual powers, as being his highest welfare both in process and in result. And the means by which this is being effected is the experience of life.

II.

GOD COMMUNICATES WITH MAN.

IT seems implied in this conception of God's purpose, that he would make some communication to men more definite than they can of themselves deduce from the world. And men have always believed themselves to possess such communications.

The first thing, in face of an alleged message from God, is to judge of its authenticity. This may rest either on our estimate of the messenger or on the impression which the message makes upon us. We are entitled to assume that an explicit message from God will harmonize with that which we learn of him from the order of nature and the course of events; and since we have found these to disclose a divine purpose of educating man into harmony with God, we may begin by requiring that this purpose shall be not less, but more distinct, in both the messenger and the message.

If our estimate of the messenger is to authenticate the message, it must be because the message which he brings has affected him as it is expected to affect us. Therefore no greatness which he may exhibit, for

instance of social power or of learning, in the least authenticates any message he may deliver as of God, unless we find him, judged as a man like ourselves, to be in harmony with God.

As to the message, we may consider it authentic so far as we find that it re-enforces the tendency of the world to bring man into harmony with God. And we may judge of this either by the effects observed in others, or, far better, by its influence upon ourselves. Indeed, this response of the soul is the most satisfactory and the most generally received of all tests. As we find in all nature correspondences between parts helpful to each other, and recognize that those surroundings are the most congenial amid which any living thing grows to its best state, so the quick response of our own hearts, and the ennobling influence upon our own lives, which follow certain teachings, become for us the best warrant that these are divine.

Therefore, the only reliable test of the authenticity of alleged revelation is for each individual his own judgment of the effect produced by it on those who have received it, whether as prophet or as disciple.

All attempts to evade this test fail. If miracle is alleged, still each must judge for himself whether a miracle has occurred, and, if so, whether the power it attests is in harmony with God or not. If the authority of the learned is appealed to, or the consensus of the

multitude, still these have authority for the disciple only so far as he judges them to have it. Briefly, the object of divine revelation can only be to further the divine purpose which rules man ; and that only can be judged to be divine revelation which is first judged to have this tendency.

A message from Gód to man is as much conditioned upon man's capacity to receive as upon God's willingness to communicate ; and man can receive any message only so far as it is expressed in terms, whether verbal or symbolic, of his own experience. If, therefore, God has spoken variously to men, now to an individual, now to a nation or race, now a supreme word to all mankind, it must be expected that the terms of expression will be found as different as the experiences of those addressed. We must not, therefore, so apply our test as to reject every alleged message which does not further our own education towards God ; but we are to consider of each whether it did this for those to whom it first came. And for deciding this we may use both our own judgment of its adaptedness and the testimony of history.

Divine messages of local or temporary application can hardly be called *revelation*, which is an unveiling of God. They are rather a thinning of the veil, that through it God's movements may appear, authentic,

indeed, but vague and blurred. If there be a true revelation, an actual unveiling of the infinite God, it must be expressed in terms which all men can to a useful degree apprehend, which cannot lose their meaning with varying circumstances, and which are capable of unfolding more and more divine meaning as the experience of life enlarges men's power of apprehension. Such a revelation cannot be verbal. It must be expressed in an epitome of all human experience. It is found perfectly and exclusively in the person of Jesus Christ.

But as other divine messages prepared the way for the coming of Christ, so a consideration of the others may prepare our minds to study him.

There are scattered through history points of enlightenment which seem either to express or to have caused a tendency to higher thoughts, but of which we can give no definite account. Such are the vague intimations in the Scandinavian mythology of the final destruction of their system and the incoming of something better. Such is that secret wisdom of the Egyptians, to which so much has been attributed, of which so little is known. Such were the mysteries of the Greeks, the secret of which has been so marvelously kept, while their ennobling power was attested by many great minds. These and many more, less or

not at all known to us, have doubtless furthered God's purpose, and may be fairly classed among his obscure messages to men.

But there are seven systems which have avowed the purpose of bettering human life, and have proved their power by controlling for many centuries the conduct of vast numbers of mankind. Of these the Jewish and the Christian are reserved for later study. The others, namely, those of the Brahmans, of Buddha, of Confucius, of Zoroaster, and of Mohammed, while they differ much in special characteristics, have a certain common feature which sets them aside from the other two. Each of the five fixes its regard upon a certain set of human conditions, which it finds existing or which it prescribes, and makes full human attainment consist in perfect conformity to these. They have no note of progress.

1. The Brahman, insisting that spirit is everything, and finding this hardly received by human nature, bends all his efforts to establish that belief. But neither does he offer any hope that mankind will attain this truth, nor does it appear what lies beyond for those who have attained it. There is neither present progress nor a future goal.

2. The Buddhist, beginning with the assertion that life is the greatest possible calamity, seeks to ease it by deeds of self-sacrifice and kindness. But life

remains a calamity, and the only hope of peace is in a mysterious escape from life, which may be annihilation.

3. Zoroaster, in a nobler vein, faces the evident conflict between good and evil, and summons men to enlist for the good. He vaguely tells of the Infinite, greater than this strife, who will at last terminate it by the triumph of good. But the present struggle is not shown as one of progressive victory. The hundredth generation only repeats the hard warfare of the first; and how the consummation is related to this long, weary history is not shown.

4. Confucius aimed at the ordering of daily life. The future is to be merely a sequence of years, in which will be accurately repeated that which is already established. All is tied to the past and progress unconceived.

5. Mohammed gave his followers the immense power which comes of the consciousness of God. Not only is God one, but he is omnipotent, and always concerned with us. But for this great engine no corresponding work is provided. Man is simply to conform to the existing conditions of life, age after age, with obedience to certain formal requirements. Of any purpose by which the ever-present God is ruling the world, no hint is given.

Of course, other religions might be named which

are or have been of great local importance, and have, indeed, attracted much attention beyond the circle of their votaries. But these five are all which by their vast extension and their tenacious vitality have a claim to be considered here.

Now, such widespread and persistent phenomena of man's mental history must certainly have been active agencies in God's hand. The Church has, naturally enough, regarded them at one or another time as rivals, and denounced and hated them; and perhaps, under the pressure of active antagonism, nothing else could be expected. But when we remember the purpose of God and his infinite resources, it must seem presumption indeed to declare by what ways he may reach men for their good; and if we consider the multitudes for whom these have been the only religion, if we read the nobler pages of their literatures, or study the best examples of character which each has produced, nothing but the blindness of bigotry can keep back the belief that God has used these great agencies to bring his children, by ways not familiar to us, and in a sense we may not yet appreciate, nearer to himself.

Each of them is based, as has been shown, on a great fundamental principle essential to man's highest life; and through this, doubtless, each may open access between God and man. But life is too complex

to be resolved into a single principle; and, however willing we may be to believe that it answers God's purpose to approach great masses of men in this way, one group from one side and another from another, yet it is in the nature of the case that no one of these can fully suffice for man's complete education. Each carries its limitations in its very constitution; and history plainly demonstrates this fact, for each has been inseparably allied with a stationary condition of society. As they give no incentive to progress, so neither can they adapt themselves to it; and forward movements otherwise impelled immediately arouse a conflict. None of them, therefore, can assert any claim to be universal, either in the sense of sufficing for all men or as meeting all the wants of any.

It is not easy to guess what may be the function of these great religions in the future development of God's purpose. A deep influence was evidently exerted upon the faith of the Jews by the doctrines of Zoroaster during the Captivity; and the speculations of India affected the heresies, and perhaps indirectly the faith, of the early Christians. Analogous results may come in the future from the contact of the Gospel with the ethnic faiths. Certainly we already see a tendency to broader and simpler views of Christianity growing out of missionary work. It may even be that changes too complex or too radical for us to anticipate will grow out of these associations.

These religions belong to the vast, unmoving, conservative majority of mankind, which remains from century to century unchanged ; while that progressive movement of human development which we have seen corresponds to the course of nature, has for the last twenty-five centuries belonged to the European minority. It cannot be that this distinction is to continue. Indeed, our day is witnessing the beginnings of movement in many parts of this long stagnant majority. And it may be conjectured that when the Asiatic peoples enter at last into the course of progress, the contributions which they will certainly make to the world's life will somehow be found identified with their religions. All of these, except the Mohammedan, had their origin in a remote past, before the rise of European life, and at a time when the vigor and progress of the world lay in Asia. It may be that the Asiatic religions will be found to have transmitted across all these sleeping centuries some products of man's earliest vitality which European life has not reproduced. The discoveries of our time continually bring to light the surprising attainments of the earliest men in construction and art, in jurisprudence and business ; why may we not suppose that they made in the spiritual field equally surprising attainments which lie buried and unguessed under the vast accumulations of the centuries ? If there be any

truth in this conjecture, of course it will appear just in proportion as the life of the West mingles with and understands the patient conservatism of the East. It is certain that the East needs the West: it may be that the West cannot run its full course without the East.

Judaism is a dual system. On the one hand, it legislates for a certain race, for certain social conditions. Its whole history proves that it tends to intensify racial feelings, and to isolate those whom it rules. Thus viewed, Judaism is therefore as unfit as any system yet considered to be called universal or a revelation. But, on the other hand, there runs through all the life of Israel a higher strain. God is announced as ruling all nations for his own purpose. The triumph of this purpose is declared to be constantly preparing, and its consummation sure. Nor is this a subordinate strain. It appears at the very beginnings of the race, and, running through all its history, dominates the noblest minds, and increases its vehemence at every crisis. It sets righteousness before ceremonial, the pure heart before the ordered life.

This second aspect presents us with a view not even suggested in any of the other systems. The fervor and emphasis of Judaism pass quite beyond outward and accessory things, and deal with that in

man which is universal ; and they deal with it for its development and greatening. Here, then, seems at first a glimpse of universal religion, the true unveiling of God. But in the many centuries of Jewish history we find the narrow race prejudices always growing tighter. The voice of seer and prophet telling of broader relations is interpreted down to the people's narrowness ; and if we had not the original literature of the Jews we should not learn from their history that their system differed from those already condemned.

If, too, we try to frame the larger utterances of the Old Testament into a system apart from the ceremonial law, we find it both fragmentary and vague, — marvellous beginnings, but nothing complete. It is obviously the prophecy and origin of something yet unfinished. Here was a people intrusted with a message too great for their understanding, — a message which stimulates and awakens large expectation, but points always to an unrevealed future ; and yet a message which seems capable, if only a little more were added, of reaching and satisfying all mankind. Judaism was not the light, but came that it might bear witness of the light. The sequel of Judaism is the Gospel.

Before we examine the teachings of the Gospel, it is evident from its external history that it has pre-

sumptive claims to be the universal religion. And the characteristics which will be mentioned under this head have marked it from its earliest public appearance to this day, with fluctuations, of course, but with a sequence easily traced through all its history.

1. The Gospel addresses itself to man without making the slightest account of race or social condition, and it prescribes no external conditions as indispensable. And every race and social condition has furnished disciples ready to live or die for their faith.

2. The Gospel mingles with all the affairs of human life, to select and sustain everything that can be made to contribute to human welfare, and to denounce and combat whatever works harm to man.

3. The Gospel has found its firmest footing, and won its greatest triumphs, in connection with the portion of mankind most advanced in intelligence and energy.

4. At every crisis in its history, when the Gospel seemed most in danger of overthrow by assimilating the hostile elements of the world, it has undergone a process of reinvigoration from within by a return to its original evidence and charter, the person of Jesus Christ; and having renewed its strength and purity by reverting to him, it has resumed its place at the front of that movement which makes for the increasing welfare of mankind.

5. After every such crisis the Gospel is seen to have acquired from the study of its Original, increase and energy; so that it appears to have in him an unexhausted source of growing fitness for the changing conditions of human life.

These characteristics set the Gospel far apart from all the other schemes of religion, and warrant for it the title of universal. But this term is so open to misconstruction, and is, indeed, so sadly misconstrued, that it needs to be here defined by a careful discussion. Any numerical meaning is of course excluded. After two thousand years, less than a quarter of the men now living are nominally Christians; and it would be both difficult and painful to guess how small may be the fraction of nominal Christians who deserve the name. Nor is it much more to the point to understand that this is the religion which will in time supersede all others, so that all who are alive at some future epoch will be Christians. The imagination needs only to summon the hosts who have lived and died, who will yet live and die, without so much as hearing whether there be any gospel, to put away such a claim for universality. We must look, therefore, in quite another direction.

It has been shown that we may believe God to have purposed the final harmony of mankind with himself,

and that from the beginning of the world the constitution of man and of his surroundings, as well as all the events of general or personal history, have been directed by the divine wisdom to this end. Now, this is the aim of the Gospel,—is its whole meaning. But since this process had been going on for thousands of years before the Gospel appeared, and has gone on for the great majority of mankind without the name of Christ to this day, Christianity, viewed as a phenomenon, is only a slender current flowing in the ocean of human being. And yet the more we become acquainted with the minds of non-Christian men, whether in the past or the present, the more resemblance do we find between the ideas and sentiments which the experience of life begets in these men and those of Christians. So that we may recognize the hand of God working out his purpose by all the agencies which touch or have touched men's spiritual nature.

And yet with this perception of resemblance there goes a perpetual apprehension of difference. Whenever we compare the spiritual experiences of those outside the Gospel with similar experiences among true Christians, we find in the former a weary repetition of beginnings which lead to no end, streams of living water which presently evaporate into mystical speculation or are lost in the sands of worldliness. Only the Gospel has taught men a sustained spirituality which

is able to deal freely and cheerfully with all the circumstances of life, to draw from them those divine messages with which all are charged, and to acquire through this experience at once an increasing nearness to God and a surer dominion over the world. The Gospel, therefore, is the demonstration in life and the expression to human understanding of that universal process by which God pours his influence upon men. Without this, men are swept along their course by a power they do not know, are terrified or lured by voices in the dark, are taught the rudiments of a knowledge in which they can perceive at this stage neither use nor promise. With this, they are conscious sons of God, dwelling in their Father's house, learning in their Father's school, tending through all the experience which he appoints to harmony with him. The discipline of life by which God embraces in his purpose all the sons of men, is the universal fact. The revelation of God in Christ, by which he makes us conscious of his purpose and fellow-workers with him, is the universal religion. It means whatever is elsewhere meant; it does what is nowhere else accomplished, but is needed by all.

When we look within the Christian Church for the sources of so much power, we find a multitude of sects, with diverse claims, each offering to show us the full truth. But much as they differ, all these divisions of

Christians agree that the Gospel is conveyed by two divine gifts,—a body of revealed truth which largely concerns the intellect, and a force which acts directly on the emotions and the will, called the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is, of course, a subject of doctrinal statement; but it is universally recognized that the action of the Spirit is independent of intellectual correctness, and touches the heart either without the intervention of perceptible means or by the agency of any means that may be available. By the agreement of all Christians the action of the Holy Spirit is God's constant contribution, as the revelation of truth is his occasional contribution, to the spiritual life of man; and this constant touch of God on the hearts of believers explains the persistent vitality of the Gospel and its renewals from age to age. At a later stage this subject will command our close attention.

Concerning divine truth, there is much more wide and positive disagreement among the divisions of Christendom. Each body offers a system of doctrine which it holds to be the best expression of truth. But when these systems are compared they are found to be so different, and even contradictory, they are so obviously the work of human minds progressively amending the statements of predecessors, and they so evidently strive to express something which lies behind them all, that the seeker after truth is forced to

conclude that the formal doctrines of Christians are far from being identical with the very truth of God. And yet these doctrines have held the attention and the regard of the best minds for many ages. While each new generation has sought to improve them, none have been willing to throw them entirely away; and to the most radical minds of the present many of them appeal with a force that is only half confessed. Under these circumstances the natural course of an independent thinker is to go back of the doctrines to their sources, and discover, if he can, what is that divine truth which they seek to express.

Three sources of Christian doctrine are alleged: the consensus of believers, the official declarations of the Church, and the Bible.

Consensus is the public opinion of the Church; and, like public opinion in all communities, it wields an immense force. But it is rather censor than author. By the nature of the case, doctrine must be proposed for its acceptance before it can approve or reject. While, therefore, it has played, and must always play, a most important part in selecting and establishing statements of the truth, it is evident that consensus presupposes a discovery and publication of the truth preceding its action; and he who is seeking sources must look beyond it. Besides, since the consensus of believers passes upon the doctrinal statement pro-

posed, there must be in the minds of the believers some standard of judgment antecedent to doctrinal statements, something which the Christian consciousness does not fully grasp, but which it is able to compare with any formula of belief, so as to approve or reject.

In this way we are certified of the existence of divine truth in the souls of believers, but vague and seeking expression. Now, the only way in which we can account for such an element in the Christian consciousness is to regard it as the outcome of the experience of life when guided by Christian influences. And this conception opens to our view, what all history demonstrates, the long course of man's spiritual education effected by the divine guidance through the impressions of daily life, without the intervention of doctrinal understanding. Now, what we are seeking is some point at which God's meaning in this process may become intelligible to our minds; and this, it is evident, must be elsewhere than in those unconscious effects of the process which are the groundwork of consensus.

If we turn next to ecclesiastical authority, we shall much more easily conclude that this is no source of truth, for reasons already named. The work of men's minds marks all the formulas of all the churches; and consequently creeds which give equal evidence of

learning and ability flatly contradict each other. Besides, the history of Christian doctrine as promulgated by authority shows plain and constant progression in almost every particular, a constant striving after clearer understanding and better expression of something which exists before and outside of the creed or the deliberations which construct it. But this antecedent something is that which we are seeking as better and more authoritative than doctrine. We seek the sources from which the formulators of doctrine have derived it.

Finally, when we turn to the Bible, an entirely different view is presented. Not only does Christian history show that all the deeper and more vital doctrines which the Church has formulated and the consensus of believers has ratified, have been deduced from the Bible as their source, but the character of this book meets every test which we have already found appropriate to a divine revelation. It offers very few doctrinal formulas, and those only of the broadest character. It pictures in all phases the life of man, and this in such a way as always to suggest a divine meaning in life. It therefore expresses the message of God to man in terms of human life which, as experience has proved, all men can understand and appropriate in proportion to the spiritual capacity of each. And finally, its range is so wide and its touch so

masterly that the endless variety of human needs has not at any point exhausted its teaching. We may conclude, therefore, that we have in the Bible a unique deposit of divine truth, so conveyed as to lend itself readily to that intellectual process by which doctrine is elaborated. How the deposit has come to exist, and what relation it holds to the teaching of experience, will appear as we proceed. We must now pass to a more particular study of the Bible.

The history of the Bible is quite unparalleled in literature. In its gradually accumulating parts, or as a whole, it has been considered sacred for at least twenty-seven centuries. Its parts, furnished by the hands of many writers running through at least a thousand years, have been readily recognized as belonging together; and for sixteen centuries the collection which we now have has been held by the whole Christian Church as a single harmonious volume containing the revelation of God.

The Bible has been prominent and valued just in proportion to the general enlightenment of each age. It has engaged the highest skill and learning of scholars for attack or defence; and the present age, after so many struggles, is as deeply interested in the questions which gather about the Bible as any of the past. Each successive generation, with all its changes

of social conditions and moral advancement, has found the Bible fully abreast of its best attainments; and while constantly detecting and abandoning the misconceptions which had gathered about it, has discovered in its pages new light and truth which lower stages of culture had not perceived.

But equally remarkable is the fact that the Bible has been as important to unlettered Christians as to scholars. It has submitted, without loss of its great characteristics, to translation into every vernacular; and under all skies, and in every tongue, has comforted the sorrows, enlarged the hope, quickened the conscience, and ennobled the character of men, women, and children. Nor have these two phases of interest ever proved hostile or ceased to be connected. The most learned scholars have prized the Bible for its spiritual influence upon themselves; and to its unlettered readers this book has been a powerful mental stimulus, promoting culture, broadening thought, furthering civilization.

Such being the external history of the Bible, we come to an examination of its contents with profound respect and a confident expectation of finding here the divine word.

The reader of the Bible finds a collection of writings produced by Jews of every social position, and scat-

tered along many centuries of national history. Every form of literature is represented, but the proportion of the didactic is surprisingly small. The contents are pictures of life, public and private, rude and refined, evil and good; but abstractions and wide generalizations are comparatively rare, and such as occur are mostly based on facts present to the writer. The dominant characteristic of the whole book is that it deals with current human life.

Different as the several writings of the Bible seem at first sight, they are harmonized by four conceptions which run through them all, and each of which may be traced in them from its early but positive germ through many stages of development to perfect completion. These we must consider in order.

I. The Sovereign God. The Bible is based from end to end on the conception of one almighty God. In no writer does there appear a single thought which opposes this; and even where the conception is not taught, it is obviously the conscious background of the writer's thought. In the first sentence of the Bible, God appears as the maker of heaven and earth; he assumes, when man enters, the additional character of a judge of conduct; and a little later he is represented as rewarding the trusting heart. This threefold conception of his character is the germ out of which all that follows is developed.

Till the history is far advanced, the dominant idea is that of power, whether as ruling the course of nature and of events, or as commanding the conduct of men. Gradually the idea of moral government grows stronger, at first displayed in crises, but later consolidating into a code by which men are to be judged. But through all are occasional glimpses of God seeking the hearts of men; and in the mouths of the prophets this swells to the dominant strain, so that the divine power is cited mostly to break impenitent hearts, and obedience is set above code and ritual. At this stage we reach the New Testament, and in the words of Jesus find God portrayed as the Father of men, yearning over and seeking us, comforting our sorrows, forgiving our sins, seeking to make us by all means partakers of his righteousness. The wonders of his power and the rigors of his judgment-seat have become but accessories, the least among the agencies of saving grace.

II. God's Word to Men. The writers of the Bible uniformly represent God as seeking to communicate with men. It is nowhere suggested that he is remote or difficult of access. The burden of the strain always is that God is speaking, and men are warned, urged, entreated to hear.

The occasions and the methods of divine utterance are variously conceived. At first God intervenes at difficult crises to keep or set men right, and his word is

simply stated to have come, without any hint of the channel. Later is found a body of divine instruction, partly given as a definite code, partly gathered by degrees from passing experiences, to which the current life of men is referred for guidance, and by which they are judged. But at no time does the custom cease of direct, special communications from God in reference to existing needs. At a still later stage the prophets direct their divine messages generally to the people, with a wider sweep of meaning both in space and in time, and with far more searching application to the spiritual needs and defects of men. Thus was prepared, through many centuries and many phases of human experience, that habit of intercourse between God and man which grew to its full development in Jesus Christ. At no time is the divine word abstract or mystical. It was always based upon human affairs and expressed in terms of human life, being age by age adapted to the conditions of each time, and always according with the lessons, rightly read, of man's familiar experience.

This method is closely followed when Christ appears, claiming to bring God's perfect message. He comes to make God fully known, to reveal him, not for doctrinal or philosophical purposes, but that the knowledge of God may win and comfort men's hearts; and not by definitions or the forms of creeds, but by per-

sonal exhibition of the divine character in the guise of a human life. All that had been attempted of divine communication to man, for warning, for rebuke, for instruction, for comfort under the burden of sorrow, and triumph in the face of death, was here summed up and carried to its ultimate in a life easy to be understood of all men. It was that, and all of that, which God had to say to men — his Word.

III. The People of God. Throughout the Bible we find the idea that a part of the human race stands more directly related to God than the rest. This conception begins with Abraham, descends like a hereditary possession to his children, and becomes the familiar and cherished distinction of the Jews. The narrative shows that the chosen people considered themselves selected by God for the bestowment of favors; but it is made equally clear that the divine purpose had chosen them for discipline. Of course, the former conception was more easy for a rude, the latter for an advanced, social state; but at no point, not even the very first, is the idea of discipline wanting in God's communications, and by degrees it grows to be with the prophets the central thought. They plainly represent God as having through all their history set the Jews before the nations as an enduring example of his moral government.

When we pass to the New Testament the same ele-

ments of thought appear, but advanced to a much higher stage, and blended into a conception wholly foreign to the mind of the Jew, and yet legitimately the outgrowth of his narrower belief. The racial claim to divine favor is entirely put aside. God can raise from the stones children to Abraham, and all kindreds and nations are alike before him. But still God is to have among the families of the earth a peculiar people, consisting of all those who give their hearts to him through Christ, the children not of Abraham's loins, but of his faith. And they are to be knit into a community enjoying special intercourse with God. Nor is this union of the faithful merely a mental conception. They are to be infused with the divine Spirit, which will ally them most intimately with each other and with God, and which welcomes into an equally close sympathy every soul that comes to Christ. For it is made plain that this fellowship is open to all men, and, indeed, is intended for all, the single condition being allegiance to Christ the Lord.

IV. God's Purpose for His People. The Bible is pervaded by a cheerful forward look. No disappointment or delay can quench this expectation of good to come. Its moralists use but few reminiscences except when they recall the mercies of God; but their golden age in the future is never forgotten. And they always base this expectation on the divine promises. The

narrative of the first sin is not completed without a record of promise,—the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Considering the obviously allegorical character of the whole story, we cannot doubt that this promise is an allegory of man's triumph over evil, vague indeed, but suggesting indefinite extent and clearly moral in its nature. So broad and lofty an assurance at so early a day seems quite beyond the thought of the time, and plainly marks the finger of God.

The conception rapidly changes as the Old Testament history goes on. To Abraham the promise is given with more definitely universal extent, but the moral quality is unexpressed; and as the chosen people gradually grasped their peculiar privilege, they more and more assumed the hope of the future to be especially for them. More and more, too, they made it to consist in material good, — numbers, wealth, dominion. And yet the moral character was always retained to some degree by conditioning all these blessings upon obedience.

With the increasing spirituality of the psalmists and the prophets the moral idea comes greatly to predominate. All divine favor rests on righteousness, but the rewards of righteousness are still material blessings; and this leads to a singular fulness (or perhaps confusion) of thought. So inextricably is the traditional

conception of God's blessings entangled with the larger inspiration, that it is impossible to separate in their utterances the promise of material success from the prediction of triumphant righteousness. In the same breath they often seem to declare the near restoration of a living king, and to predict the Messiah's reign. But in the New Testament all the confusion has passed away, while the forward look remains. That which God has always pointed to in the future is now proclaimed to be that men shall be partakers of his holiness. The obstacles which inhere in our nature and surroundings are fully recognized, and their overthrow and removal are provided for in Christ, the head of every man, the universal Saviour.

These four strains running through the Bible give it a coherence and unity which the literary character of the parts could not bestow. Any one of them would stamp as remarkable the book which contained it; but the four related conceptions moving consistently through the writings of so many men in so many ages, and together growing from such simple beginnings to such triumphant greatness, mark the Bible as unique, and prepare us to find in its teachings the largest justification of its external history.

From such a view we return with surprise to the fact that the Bible consists of many and most various

writings, and ask how these were co-ordinated. The answer is easily found. Every author was either Jew or Christian; every book relates to the affairs or experiences of Jews or Christians; it is everywhere obvious that the writer addresses himself to one or the other class: and the only account which can be given of the selection and preservation of these writings, while many similar ones were rejected or lost, is that the Church, Jewish or Christian, found and continued to find in these the message and revelation of God. How there came to be such writings for the Church to select, advancing step by step through the successive ages, is a deeper question which will find its answer as we proceed.

The Bible, therefore, is the book of the people of God, made concerning them, by them, for them, and by their spiritual insight recognized and revered. And this book of the people of God becomes the book of all mankind only because its consummate revelation is that God intends all mankind to become his people.

III.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

WE have already seen that the accomplishment of a revelation must depend as well on those who receive as on him who gives; and therefore the meaning of the Bible must stand in constant relation to the character and condition of God's people. In order, therefore, to understand the Word we must first become acquainted with the history of the people of God in the successive ages, not merely as they appear in the Bible, but with all the light which history affords; and not merely during the ages which produced the Scriptures, but down to our day. For the use of the Bible and the results of its use, during the Christian centuries, should afford us the best possible test of the wisdom which chose and kept these writings, and of the authority with which they speak to us. We have next to study, then, the people of God.

The Jews first appear in history, perhaps in the fourteenth century before Christ, as a horde of slaves escaped from Egypt. To the characteristics of the race, since so well known, they then added all the

moral results of slavery. Retaining traditions of patriarchal ancestors, they were inseparably united by the common descent. They were easily kindled to enthusiasm, and easily led by a strong mind ; but it was impossible to hold them to any purpose. They set out for the country of their fathers, but shrank in fear at the first view of its warlike inhabitants. They accepted the covenant offered in the name of Jehovah, and vowed obedience ; but every difficulty made them murmur, and at the first opportunity they relapsed into the idolatry of Egypt. It was only when the generation of slaves had died wandering in the desert, and a new people of freemen had grown up in that hard school, that they were fit to conquer and occupy the promised land.

Then followed an undetermined period of national development in which we see them, between the wild tribes of the desert on one side, and an elaborate, wealthy, and sensual civilization on the other, pass through endless vicissitudes of defeat and victory, always gaining in numbers and in their hold upon the territory over which they were spread ; always held most firmly together by the bond of common descent, and gradually growing in culture, institutions, and character. About 1000 B.C. their prosperity culminated under David and Solomon, and for two generations they had some political importance. But the

civil wars and general decadence which began abruptly after Solomon's death show how little basis the nation had for any eminent station. After three hundred years of increasing wretchedness the larger kingdom was exterminated by foreign conquerors, and a century later Judah met the same fate. But Judah, having spent two generations in Babylon, returned again by the sufferance of her masters, and renewed on the old ground a shadow of national existence, the tributary and plaything of the great powers about her. The history is then a blank till the native spirit blazes up in the brilliant episode of the Maccabees; but presently the strong hand of Rome repressed the national life, and finally, in the first Christian century, ended the national existence.

Considered from the political side, the history of the Jews is meagre and unworthy of regard. They showed no genius for founding a State; their territory was smaller under Herod than under Gideon; they added nothing to the common heritage of mankind in social institutions, nor in the arts of peace or war. If Israel had been left to work out and endure his destiny as other nations are, he would to-day be but the shadow of a name. And yet no nation since the world began, not Rome herself, has so occupied the attention of mankind. All men have conquered Israel,

but none have subdued him. Subjected for three thousand years to all possible disintegrating causes, and to all fortunes except great prosperity, the Jews yet remain, as they have never for a day ceased to be, a homogeneous people, known and recognized by all the world. And the phenomenon was the same in ancient times as now. While the petty nation in Judea was hardly maintaining itself, its wandering sons had traversed and influenced the world. Egypt, Babylon, Persia, all parts of the Roman Empire, had to reckon with these subtle strangers. This marvellous phenomenon, single in history, grew from the fact that the Jews were the people of God, chosen for a purpose.

It is evident that they had not for long ages chosen God. Despite the ancestral covenant they had been idolatrous in Egypt, and at every apparent relaxation of the hand of Moses they returned to their idols. The new generation no sooner came in contact with the sensual worship of Moab, than they plunged eagerly into it; and after they had become established in Palestine they readily adopted the practices of their neighbors, sometimes going all lengths, but oftener blending the worship of Jehovah and of idols in a manner not to us comprehensible. Every page of the Old Testament records the warnings, rebukes, and judgments of God, and every page, too, the backslid-

ings of the people. Even the piety of David and the wisdom of Solomon left many idols for Hezekiah and Josiah to destroy; and it was not till the remnant had returned from Babylon that the people whom God had chosen chose also him. For a thousand years the struggle had continued. A stiff-necked people had fought ten centuries, through all degrees of social advancement and all vicissitudes of fortune, to escape from the hand of God; but through all he had never permitted them to forget him, and had made visible his rule, till at last, winnowed and chastened by affliction, they had learned forever their great lesson, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Since that time they have endured for five and twenty centuries the strangest fortunes known to human history, but never once has it been heard that a Jew bowed down to idols. The primary postulate of true religion has become ingrained in the constitution of a whole race, and that race has been scattered to bear its witness wherever men exist.

It is of the first importance to observe by what process this was accomplished. It was by no breaking away from the usual course of national life, for Israel had all the stages of development common to his neighbors. To these the only peculiarity of the Jews appeared to be an unintelligible theory about

a Supreme Being ; otherwise they moved side by side with the nations around them. And yet they were always beset by God, who entered into their life and mingled with their concerns by that channel which he has always reserved for his access to mankind,—great men.

The average man is the product of his time and of all that went before. But great men in all nations have been the producers of their own times, and still more of the times which followed. Descent, education, opportunity, account for so much of the lives of great men as they share with their contemporaries ; but the cause of each one's greatness beyond the thousands who share his circumstances, remains unsolved by any study of human antecedents. And when the long stretch of history is surveyed, it is so obviously the great men who have led the march, that if we attribute to God any efficient direction of man's destiny, we must recognize great men as his channels of access.

It was so in Israel. Along these thousand years of struggle the banner of Jehovah was passed from hand to hand of a series of men in all respects closely fitted to their times, but always with open vision of that which Israel would not see. They occupied whatever station the occasion might require,—statesman, soldier, scholar, young or old, king or peasant, quickly

spent or enduring a lifetime, not otherwise different from their people than that they were men of high endowments, and the spirit of God was in them. In other nations the divine purpose had wrought by great men raised up, doubtless, for their special ends, but ignorant what power impelled them. In Israel, since the very aim of all was that the people should know Jehovah, his servants must be conscious of their calling, and do his will with proclamation of his name.

By this universal method, then, adapted to this special purpose, God brought it to pass that by the time Christ came there had been in the world for four or five centuries a peculiar people, who, having struggled against him for a thousand years, had at last been conquered, not by destruction, but by complete conversion, and had now for many generations proclaimed in the face of all the world that he alone is God. So that the foundation was ready and seasoned, — the fundamental beginning of all true faith. The sovereign rule of God is assumed on every page of the New Testament. It needs no argument to establish it and no experience to test it. The new word is, “*Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*”

From this point it might seem that the work was simply to go on in the same lines; that the new people of God were to be the children of the old. But the teaching of the New Testament and the subsequent

course of history alike contradict the thought. This great foundation being established as an inextricable part of human history, there was now to be built upon it a new faith broad enough for all mankind, — the universal religion. The Jews had been perforce concentrated ; their whole thought was narrow and tribal. To form a people who could receive the universal revelation, other elements of human development must be combined with that which had been taught to Israel. And since these new elements must bring with them the qualities of breadth and human power, it must needs be that while God had been training the Jews for their part, he had been elsewhere conducting another development of mankind, which should be ready, when Christ came, to contribute for the new people of God that which Israel could not furnish.

The world into which Christ came was the Roman Empire. This vast conglomerate assembled within itself all that man had hitherto achieved in every department ; and the best of all, dominating all, was the Grecian culture.

Five or six centuries before Christ the Greeks emerged from their obscure past, to which all preceding civilizations seem to have contributed, and pushed rapidly forward to an intellectual greatness before unknown. In politics, social order, philosophy,

literature, art, they opened new paths, and became the great examples and teachers of mankind. The importance and the possibilities of the individual man for the first time came boldly to sight, and the boundless opportunity of human culture and advancement first appeared. They lacked only the genius for organization to become the masters of the world. This want was for a moment supplied by the great Macedonian; and the civilization of the Greeks, marshalled by the half-barbarian Alexander, swept all the East with conquest. But the unity was transient. As soon as the master-hand slackened, the individualism of the Greeks again asserted itself, splitting the great empire into new states, all of which, however, had been seeded with the Hellenic culture.

Meanwhile, Rome had been slowly growing in the west. With a power of organizing which had never before appeared, she had grown strong within, and had then attacked, subdued, and incorporated kingdom after kingdom, till at length she was mistress of the entire Mediterranean basin. Nor was it a mere conquest of arms. Under her sway every people, indeed, enjoyed its own language, its own institutions; but so complete was the incorporation that all constituted one empire. Within the Roman borders universal peace prevailed. Travel was safe and easy by land and sea; commerce flourished; justice was adminis-

tered; order prevailed. Only the turbulent or the zealously patriotic had any grievance. The common man everywhere was at peace in physical content. But over all these lands the culture of the Greeks spread and ruled. The common language of the world was Greek. Literature, philosophy, art, followed Grecian models. The Greeks, scattered everywhere, were the schoolmasters of the nations.

The motives, then, of this great civilization were two,—the unbounded culture of the individual and the endless possibilities of union.

In all this history God had veiled himself. True, he had not been without witness, for the instinctive demand of the soul for something higher had led to many religions. But these were only adjuncts to the political and social life, never, as in Israel, its primary force. The stage had been cleared, that man might try what he could make of himself and the world without visible aid from above. And the human race had been sifted for long centuries to separate in the two rival peninsulas the choicest strains of humanity for this great discipline.

The result was magnificent. The world cannot hope to see the experiment again so fairly tried nor so brilliantly successful. And yet the very hour of achievement was the beginning of disappointment. A deadly

weariness was growing over men's minds. The world seemed small and dull. Art was degenerating ; philosophy had divided into many contending sects ; social life was aimless and vicious ; numberless superstitions found votaries ; and the wisest men looked hopelessly to the future. The struggles of so many ages seemed after all to have accomplished nothing that could last.

And so this long education of the gentiles had reached a condition the exact complement of Israel's state, both in their gains and their defects. On the one hand a ruined nation, broken, scattered, subdued, but strong in the hard-earned knowledge of Jehovah ; on the other, an empire splendid with all the greatness man can of himself achieve, but weak at heart and weary because "the world by wisdom knew not God."

Without doubt God had presided as much over the one as the other ; had as truly raised up men in Greece and Rome to lead the gentiles towards his appointed ends as in Israel. And it was only when these ends were reached, and all was thus prepared, that the fullness of time was come.

IV.

CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIANS.

INTO such a world came Jesus the Christ, who alone of men has perfectly combined the inherited gains of all mankind, the teachings of the ages, and has added to them what else God had to say. So that in him all divine utterances are summed up, things old and new, and he is the perfect Word of God. Not, indeed, that Christ was the outcome of human circumstances. He of all men was least the product of his age, was most the producer of what followed.

He was bred upon the ground where Jew and gentile met, and shared the characteristics of both. No Jew had ever so grasped the meaning of God's universal sway. To live under this was his meat, his daily breath. He took no step and spoke no word of which the consciousness of God was not the ground and the strength. The age-long lesson which Israel had so slowly mastered was to him the first of intuitions. And yet the zealous leaders of the Jews refused to know him as a Jew. They called him a Samaritan and a lunatic; for he was wholly without the narrow spirit of the race: he corrected Moses,

cast away the traditions, welcomed gentiles, looked for a following in the future far beyond the bounds of Israel.

He was truly Greek in his broad and intelligent human sympathies. All his words aim at the essential humanity. The face of nature and the course of daily life were his text-books; the intuitions and the conscience of men the points of departure from which he built his doctrine. And with a grandeur of thought truly Roman he labored to win the world. He foretold what the ages have realized, — the extension of his influence to all lands. The boundaries of his thought were as much wider than Cæsar's as his aims were nobler.

And yet this man, who possessed and bettered all that was best in Jew or gentile, had learned in no school, whether of Athens or Jerusalem. It was as if he came to the world from its antique sources, speaking all the dialects of the world with a purer strain and a clearer utterance. What others had laboriously learned by generations of arduous discipline, came freely to him as he lived his humble life and followed his noble thinking among the hills of Galilee. And not only did all come to him which others had learned, but to all this he added vastly more. For God had not yet spoken his full meaning. The veil had thinned, indeed, but the view was clouded still. Now,

the world being at last able to see, God would indeed reveal himself. And since for human understanding the truth must be expressed in terms of human experience, there was set before the world in Jesus the express image of God in the fashion of a man.

We shall have to discuss, when we come to consider the Christian doctrines, the momentous import of the fact that this was possible. It is enough to say here that it implies so close a relation of man to God that no dividing line can be drawn, nor can any contrast be maintained except in degree. For the present we have to look only at the visible characteristics of Jesus and his teaching, and to consider what were the vast additions which he made to the heritage of the people of God.

The first peculiarity of Jesus is the perfection with which he combines in a harmonious character all excellences hitherto known, so that all previous greatness seems one-sided and defective. The ardent Jewish theism was not more conspicuous in him than the marvellous intellectual subtlety with which he touched all subjects. This, combined with pungent wit, unfailing tact, and a perfect literary sense, made his sayings like proverbs, open to all alike, capable of translation into all languages, and so vital that they have lived across two thousand years; while each of them

so profoundly touches the core of truth as to express a final analysis. And yet the aim of all was not controversy, nor the founding of a new philosophy, nor the moment's applause; it was all aimed with the shrewdest common-sense at the daily life of the men around him, and evinced a practical grasp which was of the genuine Roman type. There had been no such man nor any hint of him. The qualities, indeed, had seemed to exclude each other; and the mere demonstration that humanity could rise so high and remain so truly human was enough to kindle anew the hopes and ambitions of the race.

But all this was only the basis of personal character which brought to the people of God the final divine revelation. We may for the present purpose divide under five heads what is claimed as new in the relation of Christ. Not, indeed, that any of these points had been unsurmised; for God had not left himself without witness. But much may be dimly felt after which is not grasped, and, the final truth once spoken, all the antecedents appear with new distinctness.

I. The Fatherhood of God. The reverence for God which had been in the most advanced Jews the loyal affection of a subject, became in Jesus the love of a son. The Old Testament, to be sure, like all other religious books, speaks of God as Father; but they are all thinking of him as the Author of our being.

Jesus elevates the meaning to comprehend the solicitude, patience, and ready forgiveness of paternal love. Nor does he merely speak of this. All his character and all his consciousness are penetrated with the joyful sense of divine communion. So that he not only presents to us the perfect example of filial obedience, but he so fully inherits his Father's traits that in Christ the divine character comes plainly to our sight. And the result of this communion is that in him perfect love has cast out fear. There is for him no surrounding shadow, no beyond, whether of present or future reach, that can disquiet him or hinder his freedom of thought or action. His whole nature, too, is expanded by this continual touch of God, so that he seems greater than men and only by condescension wearing our form ; until deeper study fails to find any trait which is not as truly human as divine ; and the great truth emerges for the first time to men's eyes that the children of God are indeed partakers of His nature.

An inseparable corollary of the divine fatherhood is the human brotherhood. It had remained for the Gospel to declare that all human beings are brethren, not by virtue of physical constitution or of any common endowments, but because of an intrinsic worth which is derived from the divine parentage of all and constitutes in each the image of God. This idea once conceived necessarily abolished distinctions which

had been thought essential. Henceforth there was "neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither bond nor free," and the entire subsequent course of human history shows the Gospel struggling to reform the institutions of human society upon this new basis. That the struggle has lasted so long, and success has come so slowly, only indicates the profoundness of the new principle and the magnitude of the proposed changes.

II. The Triumph of Righteousness. That righteousness ought to triumph is the first postulate of ethics, (if it be not an identical proposition,) and it has been the theme of moralists in all ages. That it will triumph has been the hope of the best men, and is more or less clearly promised in most religions. But the nature and the process of this triumph have lain much in obscurity. In the revelation of Christ, however, all is plain. Righteousness becomes, not formal compliance with any law, but harmony with God ; and the entire life of Jesus illustrates alike the negative and the positive side of this statement. The triumph of righteousness is with him no mere victory after conflict, but complete conversion. It is not enough to banish or hide or prostrate the sinner, with whatever completeness ; the triumph is achieved in the individual case only when he is no longer a sinner, and in all its fulness only when there is no longer any sinner.

But it was not enough to teach this as the destined future. The especial emphasis is laid upon the assurance that this process is going on at every moment. God is working in every event of human experience towards this consummation. The scene about us is not the doubtful struggle of Zoroaster, but the skilful and successful working of God drawing all men to himself. Not only is there no place for doubt, but there is no retreat and no pause. "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" — all the world and all the time.

III. Immortality. It was not reserved for Jesus to announce the immortality of man. Probably the secret doctrines of the Egyptians and the Greeks contained this tenet, and certainly the Pharisees made it very important. Nor did he make any very definite revelation of the conditions and occupations of the future life. If all that Jesus is reported to have said about the conditions of the future be assembled, it will be found to convey very little conception of details or of methods — hardly more, indeed, than the repeated assertion of life beyond death. We must look in quite another direction for the unmeasured light which he threw upon this subject.

All previous teachers who had anything to say about a future life, had taken the physical nature of man and its processes as their conception of life, and

had regarded the life beyond death as somehow a prolongation of this or an annex to it. With this view, death was the inevitable antagonist and conqueror of life. Such life could never for a moment escape from the shadow of its approaching doom ; and however it might be promised that after that dread experience an awakening should come, still the immeasurable loss must be sustained, the treasure must be dropped from our hand, and the best comfort was the hope that it might be somewhere found again.

Jesus conceives the matter in a wholly different strain. Man's life is his spiritual being, about which the physical is wrapped as a garment, deriving what is called its life from the true life within. When the garment is worn out or no longer serves, it falls away. One is not much concerned at the loss of a garment. The thought of finality or of ruin finds no place to enter. The old gone, life puts on new wrappings and proceeds. Jesus, therefore, is said to have "abolished death." His aim does not seek the future, but the present. He will make men so understand what life is, and so consciously partake of it, that the body's fortunes or its loss will be to them mere incidents, and instead of struggling to conceive how life is to be resumed after death, they will marvel how men could have imagined that the mortal stroke had anything to do with life.

This explains what has often been thought a confusion of New Testament language. The same passage seems in one light to speak of righteousness and present faith, while from another point it seems to tell of immortality. But these things are one. The life eternal, which is the centre of all New Testament teaching, is a present state which has no transient quality and looks for no disaster. And all this is brought to us, not as concerning the far-off future, but for its present power. It touches the true conception of the blight and evil of sin; for sin opposes, and, to the extent of its power, extinguishes the true life, leaving man a dwarfed and crippled being, imprisoned in his body. It thus poisons the stream which flows toward the future, making the physical life so predominant that every forward look terminates in the dread of death. "The sting of death is sin." Hence it is that Christ's work in saving from sin and in opening immortality are so inextricably blended in the New Testament.

The heathen poets were accustomed to sing of the immortals taking human form, to lay it off again at pleasure. But through this disguise ran always the immortal consciousness, giving splendor and dignity to the person and revealing itself in every act: "*Incessu patuit dea.*"

He who will look may trace all this in the person of Jesus; and that approach to it which his true disciples

have shown in every age, glorifies their days and declares them, to themselves and to all, heirs of immortality.

IV. Philanthropy. The love of men exhibited by Jesus had many characteristics new to human experience. With a true human tenderness for particular friends, it is still the essential humanity which he loves; and this makes him equally near to men of all classes and kinds. Other philanthropists, resting on something less central and universal, have leaned to this or that kindred, class, or quality of men. Jesus alone is the universal lover.

It grows out of the same fact that his love is profoundly wise, and seeks to confer on its objects, not that which will please, but that which will benefit them. Since it was necessary that he should bestow largess in unmeasured abundance, both to fix the attention of the careless crowd and to express the tenderness which would not be hidden, he healed disease; for health is at once the most fundamental of physical blessings and the most universally valued, while it can in no way pauperize or debauch the receiver. In the physical domain, therefore, his great gift of healing fully justified the wisdom of his love.

But he constantly aims deeper. He warns the newly healed that sin is worse than sickness. Teaching and example alike point to the spiritual as the true seat of

man's welfare; and from the announcement of the angel at Bethlehem to the acceptance of the penitent thief, the purpose of his life still appears, — to save men's souls. Nor is this a limited or contingent love. In his own parable the shepherd goes after the lost sheep "till he find it;" and all Christ's words and acts furnish not one suggestion of loss or shame beyond his seeking. His healing is not for the worthy alone; his pity is not for the penitent alone. Even to Jerusalem, that would not hear, is pointed out a far-off future when they shall call him blessed. The love of Jesus for men, immediately helpful and practical, was also universal, wise, and everlasting.

V. The Meaning of Life. This teaching finds expression far more in the conduct of Christ's life than in his precepts, although it is not wanting in the latter. He has no quarrel with the world. Keenly alive to all the misery and sin of man's estate, which were far more pronounced elements of society then than now, he nevertheless moves amid them with a serene spirit. He offers himself to men as their Teacher, their Example, their Saviour, but he is calm and assured in the face of those evils which goad so many in our time to fury or despair. He counsels no violent revolution, but is always hopeful and assuring. And the key to all this lies in the conception of present spiritual life which we have studied in connection with man's

immortality. He does not conceive himself to have made an incursion into the physical realm, like a conqueror adding a new province to his kingdom. He recognizes that human life is one, however it may be composed of contrasting elements ; and in proclaiming the supremacy of the spirit he does but set in their true relations those elements which had misadapted themselves and made confusion. Whatever is human, or has to do with man's existence, has in his view its place and work ; and the spiritual is not only ultimately to rule the natural, but it is to reach that position by means of those very teachings which the natural conveys to it.

This thought of Christ as it stands in the Gospels is far more consonant with the mind of our day than with that of any intervening age. For the slight comparisons of his work to a warfare have caught the attention of warlike ages, and quite eclipsed in the teachings of the Church those copious comparisons which Jesus made of his work to the process of growth. At last, however, we have passed the ages of war, and our time is far more truly represented by the school than the camp. The pen is not only mightier than the sword, but more esteemed. Therefore, the mind of Christendom goes back to the thought of Christ, and easily understands him when he likens the relations of life's elements to those of the soil and the seed. In such a

view the dualism which has haunted the thinking of men from Zoroaster to our day, setting good against evil, and flesh against spirit, as the antagonists in a doubtful struggle, is quite swept away. Man is a spirit, and by the Father of spirits he is placed among earthly conditions as the seed is placed in the soil. Whatever touches him at any point has food or quickening for his spiritual life, and the aggregate of existing circumstances is God's choice of means for bringing man to Himself. The birds of the air and the harvests of the field, Cæsar's penny and the housewife's broom, are messengers of God, and come to man with no other purpose and no other result than to foster in its growth the image of God within him.

This is no condemnation of the physical life ; on the contrary, all experience proves that just so far as the material part of man is dominated by the spiritual, the former becomes more beautiful, strong, and satisfying : so that Christ's understanding of life is the reverse of the ascetic, and by the mutual ennobling of body and spirit a harmonious development of the whole man and all his life is effected, in which no part is base, while that which is divine and deathless bears its fitting sway.

While Jesus lived he seemed to concentrate in himself all that was divine among men. But as soon as

he had disappeared the history of the people of God resumed its course. And yet so profound had been the impression of his personality, so supreme his grasp of what was permanent in the world's previous attainments, and so immeasurable the additions which he made, that the figure was none too bold when the apostle called him the second Adam. With him the human race began anew. The men of the first ages felt this keenly, and gave him all their heart and mind. But in our day, looking back across all the Christian history, we can far more clearly see the force of the comparison. For while his revisions of, and his additions to, former things came upon the world as the visible beginning of a new era, we can now see how truly they were represented by those parables which tell of the leaven or the seed. God's gift to the world in Christ was germinal. The experience of every age has given new impulse to its development, and the ever-recurring crises of weakness or need in the Church have still found some new and adequate supply evolved from the continuing work of Christ among men — something never before experienced because never before needed.

No man can thoughtfully study the history of the gospel without discovering before his eyes a great spiritual organism, instinct with life and growth. And none can search for the causes of renewal, as the

Church has again and again experienced it, without seeing that in every case a return to Christ was the source of better things. It is, therefore, to no dead or absent Lord that the Christian looks back. He is authorized to take in very literalness the parting words of Jesus, "Because I live ye shall live also;" believing that the visible fortunes of men are with each generation more and more potently governed through the power of the spirit by that second Adam, who is to-day, as he was in Judea, "both Christ and Lord."

We must now resume our survey of the history of God's people. And presently followed a strange phenomenon. The treasure which the chosen people had slowly accumulated, and which had been completed by Jesus, being enucleated from its husks of Jewish race and ritual, was forthwith more precious to gentile than to Jew. It formed instant alliance with the best results of Grecian culture and Roman energy, and, spreading beyond all limit of land or race, constituted and marked off the new people of God for all the future.

Of course the process presently began by which elaborate systems of visible order and of philosophic thought usurp the distinction of spiritual life. But amid whatever vagaries, ecclesiastical or theological, the first centuries demonstrated what all since have

proved, that the spirit of God ceases not to work among men, and the people of God are of every kindred, nation, and family of the earth. It was inevitable that the Roman spirit of authority and established order which had so wonderfully shaped the political world should assert itself in the Church; and this, in fact, became the conspicuous feature of Christendom till the German invasions had produced their fruit. Into every relation of life, political, social, domestic, and equally into the religious, these breezes from the north brought the vigor of self-reliance and personal assertion. The struggle with authority was long and fluctuating, but gradually there returned something of the ancient Greek sense of individual importance and liberty, and the renaissance broadened into the light of the modern world.

Of the varying fortunes of the Church through this long struggle nothing need here be said; but to the people of God, scattered through all lands and churches, the new light of modern individualism has brought only help and an open way. The vast multiplication of sects and creeds has enabled quiet souls to find the blessings of association and mutual help with the least compromise of their intellectual tendencies. To be sure, strife and bitterness have vexed those to whom religion means form and creed; but side by side with all this has steadily grown, with the

broadening of modern thought, the disposition to emphasize less the wrappings and media, more the inner life. And now in our own day, the Gospel having been carried by missions to men of other races and other faiths, the inadequacy of much that had seemed sufficient to Western minds is sharply demonstrated. The word comes back from the East that subtle distinctions and cruel dogmas and cumbrous forms must be stripped away if minds so unlike ours are to receive the Gospel; and that when these are stripped off, the essential revelation of Christ exhibits all its ancient power to reach and win the hearts and lives of every race.

Such, then, in mere outline has been the history of the people of God. Their career is closely analogous to that evolution of revelation which we have seen to run through the Bible; as, indeed, for reasons already suggested, must be the case. Beginning with a single race definitely and strongly announced as chosen by God, the history runs on with constant misapprehension of their calling and constant divine discipline, under which a succession of clear-sighted men receive and transmit what their associates only vaguely understand,—a people within a people. This stream of ancient impulse runs broadening through the history of mankind, receiving successive affluents from Gre-

cian, Roman, German, and Oriental sources, and developing its latent power and excellence into ever greater activity. The growing and spreading people of God, sometimes hidden from sight amid earthly wrappings, sometimes stripped to plain view for its mighty struggles, becomes from generation to generation more numerous, stronger, and more consciously possessed of its imperishable divine treasure,—the salt of the earth, the leaven which is to work till all the lump is leavened.

V.

TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE.

WE have now to return to the study of the teachings of the Bible, aided to find their real meaning by constant reference to the experience of this chosen people, who have produced them, preserved them, and by them are to grow till they fill the earth.

The Bible everywhere addresses itself to the current life of men. There are indeed parts, as some of the prophets and the Revelation, which seem mystical and remote from familiar things; but it is always found that this character belongs to the manner of expression and the illustrative imagery used, while the subject-matter of the writer's thought is still some part of current life.

The range of the Bible in time is so vast that all forms of social order are touched, from the half-savage nomads of the Arabian desert to the inhabitants of voluptuous Corinth. And every social grade and all degrees of personal excellence find their place. It is

with the whole of life, too, that the Bible deals. All the elements of human existence are portrayed with sublime impartiality: success and pleasure have their full attention; sorrow, defeat, the bitterness of death, are in no wise overlooked; the highest virtue and the foulest sin, shame, injustice, cruelty, whatever is found part of human experience as man's history rolls on—all are set forth and handled in the Bible as component parts of its subject-matter. It has been difficult to teach men this view. At various stages of their history the people of God have tried to set apart some section of human life as particularly the object of divine regard and the field of religion.

It was natural that the Jews should find in the peculiar order of life prescribed by their law a readier approach to virtue and a closer intercourse with God. But so far were they from being right, that a large part of the work attempted by reformers and prophets was to break the bonds of formalism and lift the hearts of the people to heights which the Law could not reach. And Israel only prospered as the spirit was stronger than the letter. The ascetics and recluses of the early and the mediæval Church aimed at the same thing, seeking an ordering of human life which should omit its undesirable elements. But the result was disastrous both to the personal character of the votaries and to the social state of the world around them. Indeed,

the great condemnation of all such attempts has been that to the extent of their influence they arrest that social development through which alone the world improves. In every case the inevitable reaction which summoned all men back to the whole of life, gave new impulse to this development and set the race forward. And all this is equally true of that conception of religious living common among modern sects, which constructs from certain elements of daily life an order of living for the godly which is distinguishable at sight.

A candid reading of the Bible finds nothing of this. It is life, and the whole of life, which forms the field of its activity. Every experience of every man has some relation to the things of God. Every detail of human history holds a place in the divine plan. All the utterances of God to men are delivered in terms of familiar things; and if any of the things of God beyond man's reach, whether past or future, are suggested, they are only so far unfolded as man may understand them by some connection with the things he knows. It follows that in the view which the Bible teaches, the world as men find it offers the possibilities and the means for the highest attainments in virtue, usefulness, and happiness; and if in any crisis the means for these seem wanting, they are to be sought, not by escape from the life that now is, but by discov-

ering within its range some neglected opportunity or help. Now, this very thing, to bring to light the neglected resources which God has made ready for men, is the scope and object of the Bible. And the key to the whole process is the knowledge of God.

VI.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

THE writers of the Bible do not attempt to prove the existence of God, nor to define his nature, nor to catalogue his attributes. They display in themselves and assume in the reader a previous experience of life which has established the conviction of an over-ruling Intelligence and a desire to deal with him. And to this conviction and desire they address themselves.

The conception is frankly anthropomorphic; running through all degrees as the revelation develops, from the savagery of the wilderness, where Jehovah is a rival of the Egyptian calf, to the "Father" of Jesus. Since none by searching can find out God, and since man is made in his image, it seems to the writers of the Bible, as it has seemed to devout men of all ages, that our one hope of apprehending God is to study him in his likeness. And this ancient habit of the human mind finds its full sanction in the fact that when God consummated the revelation of himself he was displayed in the perfect manhood of Jesus. The Grecian mind was far too subtle to be content with

this simple faith of the Hebrews. As soon as the Gospel in its earliest diffusion had impressed itself upon the gentiles, their philosophers began to elaborate a divine ontology. The thinkers of the Church have toiled at the same task to this day ; and ecclesiastical authorities of almost every name have made their own views of the being of God a principal part of the required faith necessary whether for present fellowship or for eternal salvation. But it is to be noted that the advancing scholarship of our day finds less and less authority in the Bible for these positive dogmas ; and that the history of Christendom shows no constant relation between any theories of the Godhead and that sweet, Christlike spirit which alone is evidence of harmony with God.

Indeed, in all the sad history of ecclesiasticism there has been no cause so fruitful as these theories, of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. And there is no surer mark of the true progress of our age than the fact that, by virtue of experience rather than of argument, the Church is growing less insistent of these views, and rests more and more in the knowledge of God as displayed in the Man of Nazareth.

The fundamental thought of the Bible when God is named is *power*. He is declared almighty, not so much by the frequent repetition of the word as by the

habitual reference of every thing or event to him as its cause. And this is true alike of material and of spiritual things, of small and great. He suffers the sparrow to fall; he holds the stars in their courses; he hardens Pharaoh's heart; he is the Saviour of the world. And this divine power is conceived according to the consciousness of power which men have in themselves. At first it is enough for a rude age that God controls with physical compulsion the course of material things; but so soon as some insight is developed the power of God is perceived to lie, like the true power of man, in dominating will: He speaks and it is done; he commands and it stands fast. Nor has any advance of human thought been able to better this Hebrew conception. More and more the progress of knowledge shows all the power of man, physical as well as moral, to be the exercise of will; and more and more the advance of natural science finds all force pointing back to some great centre, from which it comes forth intelligent and harmonized to conduct an ordered world.

And here the biblical doctrine rests. What may be the connecting processes between the divine will and the effect, no writer of the Bible cares to discuss. But of course the ingenuity of Christian thinkers has not been content with this, and has busied itself with second causes. The most important outcome of these

speculations concerns the human will in its relations to the will of God, and the course of nature as discovered by physical science. The former theme will be better treated when we come to study the nature of man. The latter has its place here.

For the history of Christendom presents a long series of attempts on the part of ecclesiastics to limit the researches and suppress the results of physical science, as being contrary to revealed truth. The effort has always proceeded on the assumption that there is a Biblical doctrine of the methods by which God works his will. Whereas the opposite is true. As if to leave room for human discovery, the divine censorship would seem to have excluded all mention of that which may lie between God's command and the event. "He maketh his sun to rise," but whether after the theory of Ptolemy or Galileo concerns not Jesus.

This tendency to add to revelation has plagued every age of the Church, and still survives. But in every attempt to limit the establishment of natural truth the Church has suffered defeat, from Roger Bacon to Darwin. And to-day, as always, the soul truly in harmony with God finds the Biblical conception enough for religious faith : the divine will gives the initial impulse ; and through all the processes of nature, be they few or many, that power works unspent till the result appears.

The Biblical view, however, is full and clear upon one point which students of the physical world are apt to contest. Omnipotence is meant for no figurative or approximate term. Any intrinsic power of second causes, by which a process of nature once set going could for an instant propagate itself if the divine attention were withdrawn, is absolutely excluded. Whatever the means or processes, they are but channels which divine volition makes for itself. And this conception begins now to be suggested by the latest studies of science. Working only in her own domain, and not yet sure of her discovery, she is guided by many converging indications to postulate beyond all phenomena one source of power, the Cause of causes. Through this detour of so many generations she catches at last a surmise of the view so plain to the ancient mind: "Of him and through him and to him are all things."

Inseparably allied with the Biblical conception of divine power is that of *wisdom*. There is no exercise of omnipotence but has its purpose and its method. And the range of thought covered by "the wisdom of God" is very wide. Not only does it include knowledge and judgment, but contrivance, foresight, persistency, every intellectual process by which power may better reach its aims. Indeed, these faculties are con-

ceived as developed so far beyond their possibilities in man, that they become themselves expressions of the divine omnipotence, and the ideas of power and wisdom are inextricably blended.

Both Jews and Christians have been much accustomed to think of the omnipotent wisdom as acting in a sporadic and makeshift way, devising new expedients for new difficulties. But while the older writers of the Bible have something of this, even they correct themselves by a broader view, which comes afterwards to dominate and then to exclude the other. However vivid may be the writer's sense of help wisely fitted to a present need, he is always conscious that this is part of a divine scheme having extension into the past and the future, and as broad as his own horizon may happen to be,—a family, the Jewish nation, the world of Western Asia, the race of man. The New Testament writers, taught by Jesus, have cast away all limitation, and are consciously participating in the eternal purpose with which God made the world and to which he holds the world's progression, the final holiness of all mankind. This is for Jesus, and all who have learned of him, the starting-point and cause, the method, the goal of all that God's almighty wisdom has planned touching man.

This conception of divine purpose, whether widely or narrowly understood, of course implies a divine

superintendence of every moment and every act in human life. The divine hand is never for an instant withdrawn, and escape from it is impossible. "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me." And the experience day by day of this power not ourselves, which mingles with all our activity and helps or hinders all our plans, supersedes far the biblical writers and far excels any formal attempt to prove the existence of God.

How this conception escapes the paralysis of fatalism we shall see when we study the will of man. It is enough here to say that in the thought of the Bible it makes no approach to fatalism, and indeed is quite the opposite; all the biblical writers implying in one way or another something of that meaning which Paul puts into his daring paradox: "Work out your own salvation. . . . for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." Fatalism is excluded, too, by the incessant strain pervading the entire volume, which insists upon the moral government of God. For no *moral* government is possible over those who have no freedom of will. And this brings us to the scriptural view of the *justice* of God.

Justice has many phases of meaning, all easily reducible to two, — character and function. And when functional justice is fully analyzed, it ultimately rests

on character, whether of the legislator, the judge, or the executive. Therefore the root of all justice lies in character; and while the scriptural writers do not philosophize about the matter, they have at heart precisely this conception when they speak of the justice of God. He is just intrinsically and before we come to consider his administration: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." And there is special anxiety to make it plain that all his government of men is based on this intrinsic justice of character. All human experience shows that high station and great power too often lead men to disregard the rights of the weak and the humble. But every biblical writer insists that He whose station and power admit no comparison, is sedulous to vindicate the poor and needy, solicitous, as the just always are, that His own superiority shall not harm the feeblest. .

Out of such justice proceeds the entire system of moral government under which the Bible represents men as living. And if we regard the ultimate motive from which all the divine treatment of man proceeds, namely, that man may attain harmony with God, it appears that the whole aim of this government is to cultivate in man that justice of character which is of the divine essence.

The speculations of theologians have too often followed a different clew. Filled with the thought of the

divine majesty, taught by the jealousy with which human kings assert their dignity, they have imagined the purpose of God in governing men to lie in some display of his own greatness, and the first demand of his justice to be servile submission to arbitrary commands. Whatever color of warrant for this is found in the Bible, consists merely of illustrative imagery borrowed from the habits of the writer's time, while beneath is always suggested the even-handed justice which the Deity as rigorously performs as exacts. God takes no offence when one of his earliest servants puts to him the challenge, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

It is amply proved that servile submission by no means trains men in the virtue of intrinsic justice; and the whole scene is ennobled when we find a prophet who had prostrated himself before the divine majesty, bidden, "Stand on thy feet, son of man, and I will speak with thee." All conceptions of the divine government, therefore, which propose any other end for it than to make men just, are alike unreasonable and unscriptural. And there is hardly another fact in the progress of the people of God which more strikingly shows how necessary human experience is as the interpreter of divine revelation, than the broadening apprehension of God's government as intrinsically just, which has accompanied increasing justice in the social institutions of men.

The first requirement of administrative justice is a law, itself intrinsically just and rigorously observed by judge and executive. Under the divine government this law is made known to man through three channels, but the law is one. We have to study this single law and to observe its perfect identity, in the experience of man, in the conscience, and in the Bible.

It cannot be said that the physical world, the seat of man's most obvious experience, either has a moral character, or imposes on man a moral law; but it certainly impresses on the mind two things which prepare the way for moral government. These two things are a right conception of the nature of law, and a demonstration that a reign of law is beneficial to the governed. Physical law is found to be inexorable. It has no favorites, and takes no bribes. All life must adjust itself to this law or perish; and the idea of trifling with it or evading it grows weaker with every advance of knowledge. But more: since there are many laws of nature, and all inexorable, it follows that all must be combined in a certain harmony for certain ends; and so the conception of law loses its arbitrary character in proportion as it becomes more inflexible. Out of this grows the impression of beneficence; for the general outcome of nature's processes being abundance and success, and all being achieved under this complex of harmonizing laws which are inflexible, it is

obvious that the resulting success is conditioned upon the inviolability of each law, so that any occasional relaxation of the law would produce a corresponding failure of result.

When we turn to the course of human events, a moral law at once appears. Moralists of all ages and every grade of culture have agreed that the life of man is under certain obligations, to obey which brings the best results of living, while to disregard them makes life a failure. Doubtless when the moral laws thus ascertained are formulated, they will appear of the most rudimentary character; but they have nevertheless the true moral quality, and are by no means mere counsels of prudence.

The second channel of moral law is the conscience. Conscience is not a simple faculty of the mind, but consists of the combined activity of the judgment and the moral sense. The judgment when acting in conscience is not different from its usual state. It surveys the facts present to the mind, and determines their several characters and their relations. The moral sense is a primary faculty, and as such cannot be resolved into any simpler terms. We know it only because we are conscious of its action within us. Its function is to select from among all the volitions or preferences known to be possible at a given time, certain ones

which it approves ; and in the case of volitions it imperatively commands these to be made. Its word is "ought," and its unique characteristic is its imperative-ness. We are conscious that this differs from all other motives which affect the will. No calculation of advantage, no force of habit, no expectation of pleasure, however surely they may sway our determinations, are ever felt to lay upon us such an imperative as does the moral sense. Nor is this felt as an outward force. It is not aroused, nor even simulated, by any urgency of external compulsion. The mandate of the moral sense is felt to arise from some quality of our surroundings, indeed, but only because something which is in us and of us makes these surroundings the occasion of its imperative command.

Now, it must be clearly understood how these two factors, the judgment and the moral sense, work together as conscience. Alone, neither of them suffices. It is notorious that men may formulate the most exact theories of moral relations, while they show by their conduct that nothing within compels them to live by these theories. And, on the other hand, the moral sense, acting without judgment, has filled human history with a sad and terrible record of fanaticism and superstition. The latter can no more be called conscience than the former.

The function of conscience is truly performed then,

and then only, when, the judgment having carefully weighed the group of things or possibilities in question, having determined their characters and relations and set them plainly before the mind, the moral sense seizes upon certain of these presentations and issues its command. If it be objected that this supposes a slow deliberation, while it is notorious that the best dictates of conscience are often rendered instantly upon some contingency, it may be answered that these instantaneous decisions rest upon some habitual and familiar determination of the judgment, which the mind instantly sees to be applicable to the new case ; and it is of the nature of the moral sense to pronounce at sight unless the judgment calls for delay. Conscience, then, as an expression of moral law, can only be the consenting action of judgment and the moral sense, the latter enforcing as imperative what the former has decided to be just.

But this double process has no power to originate law. The decision rests upon the data of experience, whether one's own or another's ; and it is only in proportion as experience has exercised and educated it that conscience pronounces with clearness and accuracy. Whatever, therefore, the conscience decides to be law, must be already given in the facts of experience. For this reason the Author of our experience is the Fountain of all moral law, — the *Law-giver* ;

while the conscience is the capacity in man to which God addresses himself,—the *law-receiver*. We must next study the action of this receptive faculty.

The action of the individual conscience on a unique case is notoriously uncertain. But every man's experience offers innumerable repetitions of similar cases, so that certain canons of moral decision become established in each person. Still, the best results of an isolated experience are necessarily poor until they are collated with analogous decisions of others. So similar, however, are the experiences of men, that there grows up a public sentiment in each group of persons, which holds to general rules in all important moral judgments. These groups, however, are warped and narrowed by their peculiar circumstances, and their decisions receive correction as they come to be compared with those of other groups. Further comparisons grow out of the succession of generations, so that mankind has come at last to possess moral standards generalized from the broadest possible data; and all these data have been constituent parts of actual human life. Whatever authoritative moral quality, therefore, is in the final conclusions, must have inhered in that course of things which constitutes the experience of man.

Of course such results can consist only of the most

elementary principles, but they are such as lie at the bottom of all experience. Of course, too, the individual conscience continues to make its own applications of the accepted laws, and even practically to annul them under the pressure of preconception or interest. Still, it remains true that a basis of morals can be formulated which all men profess to respect, and which grows in authority with the progress of the race.

This basis may be outlined under three heads, — congenital obligations, ownership, and veracity.

a. Men are born to certain rights and duties. The child owes reverence to the parent and a personal preference to brothers and sisters; while he has a correlative claim upon the parents for support and care. Men also owe loyalty to the human group into which they are born; but it cannot be said that a duty of protection to the citizen correlative to his duty of patriotism is universally recognized.

b. All moralists insist upon the obligation of *suum cuique*. While the ideas of lawful acquisition are infinitely varied, there is no dispute that a man must be allowed to keep what he is recognized as having lawfully acquired. Life, of course, is included as his chief possession.

c. The duty of veracity looks back and forward. However men may disobey the law, they universally recognize that falsehood, the misrepresentation of ex-

isting things, is presumptively base, and needs strong reasons to justify it. And the sentiment is still more pronounced against that want of veracity which fails to make good what one has promised. The obligation of all contracts, pledges, trusts, and of all relations voluntarily assumed, falls under this head.

To this threefold basis of moral law must be added the obligation of requital as the sanction of all. Together with the first conception of moral obligation invariably comes a conviction that he who obeys should and will fare well, while he who disobeys should and will suffer; and it is noticeable that in the earliest stages the certainty of requital is even more fixedly believed than its justice. This can hardly be considered anything else than an intuition of the moral sense re-enforced by experience of those inexorable sanctions which wait upon the laws of nature. But whatever its origin, the important fact is that these fundamental moral laws are never deduced as speculative rules which it may be well for men to follow, but as imperative conditions of conduct which we disregard at our peril.

Far as all this falls short of a full moral code, it forms a wide and solid basis of morals, and is the hard-won result of numberless acts of conscience, compared and mutually corrected and combined through millenniums of human experience. It is often claimed

that these laws are deductions from utility; and certainly they indicate the course of life which brings the greatest benefit to men. But no record exists of any people, however early or rude, who did not urge whatever they knew of these laws primarily under the sanction of the moral sense, and only secondarily as useful. And the fact that that which satisfies the moral sense in the conduct of life is also the best road to success, is evidence that the world has a moral constitution; that it is so constructed and administered as to impress upon man his obligations to the law of righteousness; and that it therefore proclaims in all its history the sovereignty of a just God.

The energy and authority of conscience differ most widely in different men, both from various degrees of natural endowment and from the development which comes of use. And when it happens that a man unusually gifted with clearness and force of conscience lives among circumstances peculiarly fitted to develop these gifts, he gains the authority of an expert on moral questions, and may become an accepted law-giver. This is furthered by the fact that, as in all fields, so peculiarly in the field of morals, men who cannot themselves formulate judgments which wholly satisfy themselves, yet feel qualified to accept or reject the judgments pronounced by others, and may thus submit to a moral code far higher than any they

could have framed. These reflections bring us to the origin and the sanction of the moral code of the Bible.

Among the people of God there have arisen a series of men whose endowments qualified them, and whose surroundings impelled them, to formulate and publish moral judgments of the gravest character, which so satisfied the aggregate consciences of their contemporaries as to be received for law and transmitted to the next generation, with all the sanction of accepted authority. When in another age other men of equal eminence arose, who accepted the current laws as valid, and based their own decisions upon them, new force and wider extension were given to what had been already approved ; and in this manner a body of law grew up, professing the sanction of divine authority and received upon this footing by the nation. This divine sanction we must understand to have been first claimed by the promulgators of the law as the expression of their absolute confidence in their own ethical decisions, and to have been confirmed by the strong assurance with which the people accepted and perpetuated those decisions. And if we confine ourselves to the visible experience of Israel, this is all the account that can be given of the origin and sanction of the moral law.

But, when we come to study this law historically, we

do not find it a fluctuating series of ordinances ; but amid much that was ephemeral, we find a body of jurisprudence whose foundations were laid in the earliest enactments, and which was built into an orderly structure by many generations of moralists. It was at no point necessary to annul any fundamental principle, and the last result is visibly implied in the original germ. So strikingly is this true, that the best developed conscience of mankind at the present day finds itself perfectly in harmony with the canon of morals announced in the earliest pages of the Bible. It is evident, therefore, that some co-ordinating Intelligence must have run through all the ages, and have guided the evolution from its germ, producing through special men, acting under special conditions, the successive parts of which the whole was formed. This action of the divine wisdom is inspiration. It is to be conceived as parallel with the divine control, by which the total course of events is ordered. That God, the supreme Intelligence, might bring the intelligence of men into touch with himself upon this field, he produced special men, fitted by the very constitution of their minds for the exceptional perception of moral law, and subjected them to such circumstances as must both exercise their conscience and impel them to utter their decisions. How these divinely appointed decisions were recognized among, and selected from, the

innumerable less important dicta of other men, has already been pointed out.

Now, the divine law of morals thus revealed coincides with the best deductions of men who knew not the Bible, so far as the gentile law extends; but the revealed law carries us vastly farther. Let us note both these phases of the comparison.

The three groups of moral laws which have been named as growing out of the common experiences of mankind, cover all the outward performances made obligatory by our social relations. They are found in all gentile codes of morals, and no less in the biblical; and while much of a higher quality is added to them by the latter, yet so closely does the Bible hold to life, that nothing is allowed to lessen the force of these fundamental laws.

To these, two other laws, not universally recognized, are added by the more advanced ethnic codes, — worship and self-restraint. Worship, it is true, is an almost universal habit, but in far the greater number of cases it is rather prudential than moral. Yet at a certain elevation of mind man seems almost inevitably to recognize his obligations to some higher power, and to feel the duty of expressing them as urgently as he feels his social duties. With the obligations of self-restraint (chastity, temperance, forbearance, etc.), a

new element enters. For these duties are not conceived as things which another has a right to demand of us, but as required by a certain abstract fitness, so that it derogates from our moral dignity to neglect them.

As to the duties of worship and self-restraint, the Bible equals the most advanced ethnic codes; indeed, it in most particulars excels them. But it goes far beyond all others in applying the sense of moral dignity as a motive to all acts of duty, insisting that outward performance, however perfect, has only utilitarian value unless it is the expression of a desire for moral excellence. And this conception, thrown back upon the most rudimentary obligations, lifts them into a true moral atmosphere and ennobles life. Of course this conception is gradually evolved in the Bible; and it cannot be said that the utilitarian view of virtue is wholly subordinated to that of a vital spiritual necessity, until the New Testament is reached. And this progression of thought, as we have seen, is of the essence of biblical teaching.

But a higher degree remains. Duties separately willed to be done stand each by itself, or at most grow into a habit of the will, against which there may rage an ever-renewed struggle within; so that the performance of duty is a running fight, the outcome of which may at any moment be disastrous. Now, of all

moral systems, that of the Bible alone rises above this; here alone is righteousness coupled with peace and joy. And this highest conception is reached by the final resolution of all law and motive into love. Love to God and to man being attained, all morality flows out of it as its necessary expression. This could not be the case if moral law were arbitrary; but the whole order of things out of which the law grows being ordained by God in pursuit of his eternal purpose to harmonize man with himself, the soul which has attained to universal love and is thus near to God, wills spontaneously the things which he wills, and fulfils the law just as God ordained the law, — from an inward vital necessity. Only the Bible reaches this height.

It is through the unrelaxing administration of such a law that the justice of God works upon men to bring them into harmony with himself. The methods and immediate results of this administration can be understood only after we have considered, in their proper place, the relations of man to God.

There remains one other element of the biblical conception of God, — his *goodness*.

All parts of the Bible celebrate the goodness of God, by which they mean his willingness to bestow benefits. The contents of this conception of course

vary with each writer's understanding of benefits and of the number whom God favors. But whether it be by giving the things men wish, or by promoting their highest welfare, whether to a chosen family or to the entire race, the view is clearly held that God loves to bestow benefits far beyond the deserts of men. No doctrine of revelation is more clearly expressed than this from the very first; and it may be said, (allowing for the limitations which grow out of narrow minds,) that no doctrine has taken such hold of the people of God from the beginning to this day. Every Christian system which has logically involved a denial of the divine goodness, has embodied some device, however illogical, by which this undying belief might assert itself. It is not strange, therefore, that the new researches into the meaning of Scripture which the enlightenment of our time is conducting, are making it more and more clear that the one fundamental thought on which the whole Bible is built is that God purposes unlimited blessing to all men. His power and wisdom come to our knowledge only as engaged in furthering this purpose, and his justice is displayed to us as that quality which will not permit us to work our own ruin.

But all this carries with it an official tone; and to our deepest sentiment it seems to need for its perfection something more, which, happily, runs with in-

creasing clearness through the successive Scriptures, till it culminates in Jesus. This is the personal sympathy of God with each man. Besides the priceless blessings of an ordered world and a wise discipline, there is given to every soul the tender intimacy of divine affection, which is expressed in the revelation of the divine fatherhood. This, indeed, is the supreme revelation. The world does not teach it; no searching of human wisdom has attained to it. The Bible alone teaches man that be he who he may, if he eliminate the universe from his thought and draw near to God in his naked personality, he will find himself known and loved — nay, will find that the divine love has chosen him from the first and pursued him in all his wanderings.

It is hardly correct, therefore, to speak of the divine goodness as an element of the biblical conception of God. It is the essence of that conception, to which power, wisdom, and justice are attributes. “God is love.” So that this final consideration sums up and blends into one all that has been said of the character of God as presented in the Bible.

VII.

THE NATURE OF MAN.

WE turn now to the biblical presentation of man. It is very far from that of a scholastic recluse, and grows out of the close relation of the Bible to daily life. Man is presented as busy with common interests. He and the world are made for each other, and physical things and the course of events suit him and further his interests if he wisely uses them. It is good for him to be here, and long life is a blessing. The ways of wisdom, by which the right conduct of life is meant, are ways of pleasantness and peace. It is the result of this view, and not of any theorizing, that man is represented as the head of the creation, the ruler of the world. "Thou hast put all things under his feet." This thought is not incidental, but lies at the foundation. The very earliest mention of man announces him as made in the image of God.

The exact conception which belongs to this phrase in that early time may not be easily reproduced, but it can hardly mean any visible resemblance, because the same book contains the most strenuous injunctions against attributing form to God. Probably the

meaning was originally vague. The men of that day had observed that man rules the world by other than physical powers; that he produces results by the exercise of forces of which each is conscious within himself, but which are outwardly discernible only through remote effects. To the believer in an invisible God, this observation couples man with God at man's highest point, makes the divine alliance far more important than the connection of his physical being with the material world. God and man, therefore, constitute a class far removed from all other objects known to man—the class which makes and rules. And since God was conceived as superior and antecedent to man, the conclusion was easy that man was made in the image of God.

This profound though vague thought goes on broadening and growing clearer through the Bible, until it culminates in the revelation by Jesus that God is our Father. This reached, we no longer see man *made* in God's image, an arbitrary copy, but man born of God, and so showing by the very constitution of his being and by its origin, the nature of his divine Parent. This relationship to God, and the duty of allegiance which it implies, are made the sanction of the commands and appeals of the Bible; and the development of the possibilities which it implies in us is held up as our highest prize.

If the question be raised how far this can go and to what man may hope to attain, the biblical writers have not much to say in answer; their words are more of the race than the goal. Indeed, it is confessed that they do not see the end: "Eye hath not seen . . . the things which God hath prepared for them which love him." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but . . . we shall be like him." Upon this point, however, as upon so many others, a revelation is made in the person of Christ, which is nowhere given in formal words. He is the head and type of the race, and we therefore see in him what it is to be the child of God.

It is instructive to notice that no expression is used to signify his relation to God which is not also applied to men in general, the difference being that the common terms are specialized for him by a significant emphasis. If Christ is the *express* image of the divine person, we too are made in the image of God. If he is *the* Son of God, we too are sons of God. If he declares that he and his Father are one, he also prays that we may be taken into the same unity, and even in the same manner: "As thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be made one in us." And if to have seen Jesus is to have seen the Father, even so the application of this title to God declares that the highest social attitude of man sets before our eyes the attitude of God.

It is plain, therefore, that in the meaning of the Bible no line can be drawn which separates the human from the divine. We begin with the consciousness of great possibilities amid our imperfect lives; we see these developed in nobler and nobler examples by the best of men; we witness in Christ the perfection of excellence which never loses its familiar characteristics while it rises and sweeps on, human to the last glimpse, till it transcends our vision and blends with God, — “I and my Father are one.”

Another intrinsic characteristic of man which the Bible announces is his Immortality. This topic has already engaged us as a part of the new revelation made by Jesus. But the great importance of the subject as belonging to the biblical view of man, the further light which this relation throws upon it, and the confirmatory evidence which grows out of its prompt, enthusiastic, and enduring acceptance, may well excuse a second handling of the theme, even though this involve some repetition.

So intent are the biblical writers upon present things, that this look towards the future is late to appear; and only with the resurrection of Jesus is the immortality of man made plain. After that, and immediately after, it became the steadfast conviction of all Christians, to which the Church has clung through all her fortunes and all her follies. Indeed, so powerfully

did this conviction root itself among Christian beliefs, that when the world was sunk in ignorance, and the only ruling forces were the strong hand and priestcraft, the whole social fabric was dominated, and the most powerful sovereigns were coerced, by hope or fear of the future life. The suddenness and strength with which the belief in immortality became a factor of human life, is one of the wonders of history. Nothing is known which can account for it, except the facts recorded in the New Testament. We there find the death and resurrection of Jesus immediately followed by a new boldness and constancy in his disciples, and we find them uniformly dwelling upon his resurrection as a fundamental part of what they have to teach. It is presented as an essential of Christian faith : "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain."

And yet it is remarkable that there are in the New Testament no disquisitions upon immortality, and very little is said about the future life. No attempt is made to argue from the resurrection of Jesus to that of other men ; but it is quietly assumed that the latter is established by the former. Now, as the Bible contains several other narratives of the resuscitation of dead persons, and as no importance is attributed to them except for those immediately concerned, it becomes an interesting question why the revival of Jesus was so deeply important.

Let us clearly understand that the question is *why*, and not *whether*; for though we could find no reason, the fact of history would remain; namely, that the most powerful influence introduced among men since history began, rested in the consciousness of its first propagators, and has rested ever since, on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The cause of this pre-eminence is to be found in the whole work of Jesus. He labored to develop and establish the conception that man is the son of God. He found the world bent upon physical life. Men thought of themselves as bodies, carrying within them, indeed, a mysterious something, but essentially bodies, with this secondary adjunct. To their consciousness they were busy with physical interests, having now and then merely a touch of sentiment, not obviously of material importance, and therefore to be little encouraged. It was the first man, of the earth earthy, and the earth was his portion. If there were any Lord from heaven, he was an august Outsider, wanted for dire emergencies, and therefore to be kept favorable by prudent men, but having his own sphere, and mostly leaving us to ours.

This had been the attitude of the world always and everywhere. Now and then, it is true, a voice had protested. There had been men in all lands who had insisted that the invisible things of man are more

powerful and have more value than his body ; that they and not it are the true man. Some of these teachers had won the admiration, even the adoration, of mankind. They had illustrated in their lives the greatness of the spirit ; had resisted the temptations of sense, wealth, even of power, and multitudes had hung on their words and avowed their doctrines. But each of them, having had his day, had succumbed to that inexorable fact of physical life, — death. The wise man had had the same end as the fool. The voice ceased, the teacher was no more, the disciples went each his way, and the complex visible life of the world moved on as if no word had been spoken. When his enemies could do nothing else with the prophet or sage, he could be killed, and that was the end.

Now, Jesus had filled this *rôle* of protestant with unexampled success. He had insisted that the worth and power of man lie in his divine, not his animal, nature ; that a man might pay too high a price for the gain of the whole world ; that meekness inherits the earth, and purity, peace, and righteousness win the true blessings. He had touched life at all points, and at each had triumphantly sustained his theme. Friends and enemies thronged around him, almost equally dangerous to his purpose. His friends would make him king, would have him divide estates, would enclose him in dignities, would dictate his course ; his

enemies would entangle him in politics, make him lose himself in subtle dialectics, or silence the exuberant zeal of his followers. But nothing could pervert him. He put aside all interference without malice or excitement, and at each encounter left none in doubt that the spiritual had overcome the worldly.

At last there was nothing left for his enemies but the old, the infallible resource. They could not seduce, they could not silence him, but they could kill him. It had never failed, and neither friends nor foes dreamed that it could fail now. So he was crucified, dead, and buried. His disciples, who "had hoped that it should have been he," gave up the contest. Their hearts were full of tender memories; there were high resolves, too, and thanks for such deep instruction. But since he would not use force, not even one single sword-stroke, why of course the Sanhedrim and the legions had been too much for him. The strong hand is only to be resisted by a stronger; and beautiful and true as they held his beatitudes, these are not the things, as they still fancied, that rule this hard, coarse world. So the fair, delightful interlude was ended, and it remained only to go back to their fishing.

We can now understand all that it meant when this mood of the disciples was broken by the startling word, "The Lord is risen!" And when he came to

them again all himself, teaching the same benignant doctrines, simply taking up again the old theme that the spirit rules, all the delusions and sophistries of worldliness crumbled away, all the terrors of authority and force became empty dreams. They knew what life is and what its fountain.

Viewed in this way, the resurrection is important not as a physical but as a spiritual fact; not because the body having been dead was alive again, but because the spirit, with all its well-known characteristics, having been expelled from the body and absent awhile, returned unchanged, took up its intercourse with old friends just where this had been broken off, and used the once dead body again as its facile instrument. And all this occurred not in some corner, nor with doubtful circumstances. Jesus was emphatically a public character. He died as he had lived, full in the eye of the nation. His death was from a familiar cause, with many witnesses, and officially attested. He returned to his friends alive after two days; ate with them, talked with them, met them many times, and was seen by hundreds who knew him well. It was the most perfect demonstration possible that the soul of a man is so entire in itself as to suffer no harm when the body dies, and to be found, if by any means we can thereafter have knowledge of it, complete and perfect in all its faculties. All men knew that the

body without the soul is dead. It was here proved that the soul without the body retains all the fulness of life.

Now this, considered merely as an occurrence, of course proves nothing about the subsequent duration of the soul. But with this Jesus had been dealing from the first. He had assiduously taught that the spirit of man is the offspring of God, partaker of the divine nature, superior to the things of the world. His whole life had shown the truth of this; and when it was also shown that the tremendous crisis of death had no effect upon the soul's integrity, what could be imagined that could harm it? The assurance, then, that the offspring of God share his immortality was complete in teaching and in demonstration. That it was complete, the influence of it upon the Church, and through the Church upon the world for so many ages, proves beyond question.

It is noticeable that the New Testament is content to leave the matter here. "How are the dead raised, and with what manner of body do they come?" are spurned as foolish questions; and similarly we have nothing of the occupations or surroundings of souls beyond death. Doubtless the writers knew as little of this as we do. All is referred to the wisdom of God, "As it hath pleased him."

The great principle thus comes into notice again

that the Bible is a book for life, for the present. It is of the greatest importance that we know ourselves to be the offspring of God, intrinsically immortal. It is inexpressibly comforting and helpful for the conduct of life, to be sure that death has no dominion over us. But, this assurance given, we are remanded to our present tasks, renewed and strengthened. Doubtless, too, since whatever might be told us must be in terms of our previous experience, there is no possibility of conveying to us a conception of the state of disembodied souls. God might declare, but man could not understand.

We have next to consider those active faculties of human nature by which man performs the conduct of life. And it must be constantly kept in mind that the Bible, being a book of active life, and in the words of men who were busy with the world, addresses its readers as men address each other, and not in the abstractions of the study. There is no psychological analysis in the Bible. Whatever appears to have this character is but passing comment from the writer's point of view upon some phase of conduct. We can certainly make out the elements of a psychology from the biblical writers; and, fairly deduced, it is consistent throughout the book, and fits accurately the facts of experience. But it is only a deduction, and not an

extract from the Bible, and has only the authority which it may derive from the character and ability of those who formulate it.

We shall find it convenient to study these active faculties under four heads, — Reason, Sentiment, Conscience, and Will.

Reason. The Bible always addresses man as a reasonable being. Dealing with those affairs which constitute our current life, it assumes that we have at least a superficial understanding of them, and that we are capable of penetrating more and more deeply into their meaning and relations. It is fully recognized that life suggests problems beyond our grasp, and mysteries of being which we may not hope to fathom. But no discredit is thrown upon our rational faculties as regards things within their scope because other things are surmised which lie beyond their scope. Nor is the emphasis of importance laid upon things beyond reason, but on those with which we are easily familiar, and which make the working factors of that daily life with which the Bible deals.

The history of Christian thought shows a sad forgetfulness of this plain fact. When the first theologians began to reduce the faith of the Church to method, it seemed natural to give the first place to those high themes which so widely differentiated the new teaching

from all former philosophies ; and so the being of God, the nature of man's soul, the inward processes of salvation, took the first rank. The early divisions and quarrels of the Church turned on these recondite questions, and the farther they were from any real grasp of reason, the hotter waged the fight. Consequently, for long stretches of Christian history those who have held convictions upon these subjects which they were unable to maintain by reason against the adverse reasoning of others, have denounced reason as the mother of heresies, and insisted upon a faith which should not rest on understanding. We need only search the Scriptures to see how far all this is from their tone and their conclusions. They rest the excellence of man and his acceptance with God on the right ordering of heart and conduct, and pass without requirement those things which cannot be understood.

But the Bible is far from requiring a life fashioned wholly by reason. As we do not, so neither does it, expect that man will put all other motives aside and have logical warrant for every action. Sentiment and the moral sense are abundantly recognized and sanctioned, and even the errors of reason are condoned. Especially is there no biblical assumption that errors of thought upon matters difficult for thought to grasp are deeply hurtful to man's welfare. The philosophizing tendency of Christian teachers has gone so far in this

wrong direction as to lay an intolerable burden upon the conscience. The greater part of ecclesiastical tyranny and cruelty has been based upon, or has sheltered itself behind, the claim that the intellectual beliefs of opponents were sufficient to forfeit the favor of God and the right to the Christian name; and this not as leading to or justifying wrong conduct, but solely on the ground that wrong belief is inexcusable sin. The awful history of persecutions shows with undeniable clearness how greatly this idolatry of opinion departs from the spirit of the gospel, and how unsafe all judgments are which abandon Christ's rule, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

The process of bringing men into harmony with God must, of course, include their reasoning powers; and as by the nature of reason it cannot be coerced by arbitrary requirements, therefore it must be part of the divine purpose that through the exercise of reason, now successful and now failing, we shall little by little reach for ourselves the knowledge of the truth. And this implies on God's part all the patient forbearance with error so necessary and so well known to human teachers. But let it be observed that for this process to be sure and safe, there must lie behind it all such an inherent correspondence of human reason with fundamental truth, that when all obstacles are removed and truth is presented plainly to our sight, we shall by all the impulse of our nature recognize and hold it.

The summary, then, of what we learn from the Bible upon this subject is, that man's reason is a divinely appointed and legitimate power, destined at last to comprehend the whole meaning and intent of God as expressed in the ordering of the world; that reason is but one of several co-ordinate powers which enable us as children of God to fashion the conduct of our lives; that no exercise of reason, however exalted, can justify the ignoring or suppression of the co-ordinate powers; and that the honest errors of reason are inevitable incidents of its development, and involve neither guilt nor lasting harm.

Sentiment. The Bible everywhere appeals to the familiar sentiments of men. Awe and gratitude, love and fear, shame and aspiration, are ever-recurring sanctions; while joy, sorrow, and personal affection are recognized on every page as essential ingredients of life. Even when the formal appeal is to reason, there seldom fails to be an undertone addressed to sentiment, and often the latter swells into full control. And there is not from first to last a word to imply that the sentiments so appealed to are any other than those we knew by the same names in our daily intercourse. Nor are they merely permitted or desirable elements of life. They are fundamental. Jesus makes love the basis of law, whether concerning our relations to God

or to man, and his apostles dwell emphatically on this idea. And further, Paul declares what we might have legitimately inferred, that the same foundation which God lays for the law of our duty is the basis of his conduct towards us. Love is of the essence of the divine nature; and Christ was sent, summarizing the divine revelations and assuring our salvation, because "God so loved the world."

Theology has sadly lost sight of this biblical teaching because its authors have lived and thought away from the current life of men. They have thus come to place the intellect and the will in a supremacy which the experience of life does not warrant. Step by step the relations of men to God, and consequently their relations to each other, were formulated by a cruel logic, till the tender sentiments were cast out alike from earth and heaven. All this, however, was closet work, having terrible consequences here and there in the world, but always resisted, and gradually conquered, by the Christian consciousness. When God became remote and awful, Jesus was the tender intercessor; and when he too was transformed into a stern judge, his mother was given a place in the divine counsels, that her woman's heart might succor men. However ecclesiastics thundered or persecuted, every age of Christendom has left evidences that the people of God still existed, scattered through the world for its salva-

tion, constituting the real hope and strength of the gospel; and even though bewildered in mind, still holding fast with the allegiance of the heart to the infinite goodness of God.

The enlightenment of our time and the exigences of mission work are rapidly bringing the whole Church to the position of the biblical writers, and making plain to all that the intellect cannot grasp the purpose and the methods of God's dealings with us, without the constant co-operation of the heart. Since God is love, in order to bring us into harmony with himself, he must cultivate to the utmost the same element of our being.

Conscience. The conscience has already been discussed as to its nature and functions. It remains to consider how the Bible deals with it.

There is no discourse about conscience in the Bible; but from the first pages it is assumed that men know right from wrong, and that they recognize the claims of the right. This is not only implied in the very fact of giving laws, but the reproaches and rebukes of sin are addressed as to beings who sinned against light. Nor is this confined to those who had received the word of God, but appears in the rebukes of gentile nations. So that the Bible regards the conscience as belonging to human nature by fundamental consitu-

tion, and as existing under all circumstances. It is, indeed, expressly asserted by Paul, that "The nations which knew not the law did by nature the things contained in the law."

Theology, sacrificing obvious facts to the demands of a narrowly logical system, has asserted a lost condition of man, in which he has no longer any impulse to good ; but no such total paralysis of conscience is recognized in the Bible. Its appeals to men in general, and even to the vilest, assume a response from within which approves the claims of righteousness. It finds all sinners, like Saul, consciously kicking against the pricks. And so far does this method of the Bible go, that it leaves largely for men to determine what their duties are. Of course the extent of this varies as the process of biblical development goes on. At first the tendency is rather to specific commands, although these are given in such terms as to require much comment and definition from the individual conscience. But later in the Old Testament, and everywhere in the New, the force of commandment is removed from definite injunction and laid upon "Truth in the inward parts."

The weakness of human nature and the ambition of ecclesiastics have greatly delayed the acceptance of this truth. Men crave relief from the responsibility of deciding what their duties are ; and those who seek

to rule them eagerly make the decision, turning the whole force of conscience towards obedience to definite commands, upon which the common man passes no judgment. Just in proportion to the ignorance of any time or community has this process succeeded. But in all times there have been consciences which could not abdicate the duty of deciding upon the requirements of righteousness; and the progress of Christian enlightenment is bringing all to understand that every conscience must act for itself. It necessarily follows that a man's own conscience, honestly consulted and faithfully followed, must be for that man the supreme law of his life. Paul writes, "To him that thinketh anything unclean, to him it is unclean;" and "He that doubteth is condemned if he eat." And Jesus pleads for his murderers because "They know not what they do."

It must not be forgotten, and it is not ignored in the Bible, that ethical decisions, however honestly and carefully made, are often erroneous, and are condemned even by those who made them, after they have obtained more light. And the question, how it can consist with the justice of God to leave men to the consequences of following a monitor so often in error, can only be answered under the condition that these consequences are always capable of remedy, and that God is pledged to the ultimate result.

Will. In the intercourse of life we assume that each man can in the main determine his own conduct, and can more or less influence his surroundings. So that if a man's will is won to a certain course in matters which belong to him, the end is made probable. This is the attitude of the Bible, but with the addition that at the same time and in the same affairs the inviolable sovereignty of God is always presupposed. But whenever men have seriously addressed their thoughts to these two facts, they have felt a sense of conflict, actual or possible, between the divine and the human will ; and since it is impossible to conceive the divine will as frustrated, the question has necessarily arisen whether the will of man is effectually self-determining, or must act, in order to act at all, in exact accordance with the will of God.

Now, it is remarkable that the Bible does not discuss this question. In the very few places which touch upon it, the question itself is rebuked as if it attacked the divine authority. This is easily explained when we remember how the Bible has grown out of practical life, and that in daily affairs the question does not arise. So persistently, however, do the thoughts of biblical students return to this point, that all such study has been colored by it, and we must give it consideration if we would escape the difficulties which have thus gathered about the understanding of the

Bible. Of course we need not linger over the hair-splitting distinction that man is at liberty to *will* anything, but has no power to put his volition into action unless it accord with God's will. This evades the real question, which is how, and to what extent, the two wills can co-exist, of which the Bible freely speaks, and to which daily life bears constant witness; namely, the sovereign, invincible will of God directed to all the affairs of men, and the will of man effectual for ordering his own conduct, either well or ill, and to some extent for modifying his surroundings.

But before we begin the discussion of the human will, it is necessary to guard against a certain misunderstanding which easily besets the subject. The human unit is the entire man. We distinguish faculties, — judgment, sentiment, will, etc., — and we speak of each acting as if it could dissociate itself from the others; but, in fact, it is always the man that acts, now with one and now another faculty predominant, but in his normal state never with actual elimination of any part. When, therefore, the will is said to consider or to decide, it is implied that some action of the judgment occurs; but the consequent exertion of will is so much the more conspicuous, and we know so very little of the more hidden processes of the mind, that our attention fastens on the predominant faculty, and something which really belongs to another is attributed

to it. Nor can any error grow out of this inaccuracy of speech so long as our conclusions are always submitted to the test of actual experience. This discussion will, therefore, use without scruple those expressions which the habitual intercourse of life has made familiar.

We may consider the will of man as aimed in three directions, — towards the physical world, his fellow-men, or his spiritual intercourse with God.

No metaphysics could persuade a practical mind that man cannot to a useful extent impose his will on his physical surroundings. The small acts of every day, and the continued efforts of individuals and generations, effect changes in the location, the combinations, and the development of matter and of organisms, which can neither be denied as doubtful nor overlooked as unimportant.

And yet it must be noticed that man has willed many things in this field which he has not been able to accomplish; and he has discovered that all his power over nature is conditioned by natural laws. So that when his will merely follows impulse or the idea of a result he often fails; but by learning the laws of material things, and directing his volitions according to these laws, he may at last find a way to his ends. No exception to this has been discovered, and men who have been taught by their own or others' experience

make no attempt to force natural things by bare volition of results ; but having first learned by what methods, if at all, the laws of nature permit them to approach their desired end, they push their will by successive stages along these ways till the goal is reached. No final limit has been found to the conquests of the human will over the physical world, based upon conformity to the laws of nature.

But further, it is found that natural laws which seemed at first unconnected and arbitrary constitute a harmonious system which more and more commends itself to our approval as we more fully understand it ; so that if it were possible for man at one or another point to substitute his own volition for the law, it would be a retrograde movement, whose ultimate result must be less satisfactory to man himself than if the law had not been broken.

And so we reach this conclusion : The physical world, organized by a wisdom greater than man's, and held to its fundamental constitution by a power which he cannot override, is given to man for his use, the condition of this use being that he shall respect the laws of its constitution ; and the reason of this condition being that the world under these laws will better respond to his wisest wishes than under any substitute which he might devise. Man's conformity, then, in understanding and in desire, to the wisdom which or-

dained the world, is the measure and the only limit of his dominion over matter.

When a man attempts to impose his will upon his neighbor, the case has other features ; for it is now will against will. But so different are men, that one will is always stronger than another, often than many others ; and experience proves that it is possible for the human will to control the wills of other men as positively as it controls material things. This is done in two ways. By hypnotism and perhaps other psychic influences an absolute compulsion is attained, not widely different from the control of will over matter, and limited by analogous inviolable laws ; and while the recognized display of this power is infrequent and subject to very unusual conditions, yet probably it enters more or less obscurely into most cases where one mind controls another.

The common influence of will over will, however, is obtained by means of persuasion, in which process intelligence and emotion are enlisted to determine the subject will. But, whatever the process, no one familiar with daily life doubts that certain wills dominate and control others. It is to be observed, however, that, as in regard to matter so in this case, this is not accomplished by mere capricious exercise of the will, but by method, and often after repeated and prolonged

effort. So that the dominant will becomes aware of laws governing the wills it would subject, under which alone it can reach its ends. And these are not merely laws of process, they also govern the result; and it is with the latter that we are most concerned in this discussion. The most potent of these laws is that which maintains the unity of human interests, so that no portion of a community can reach truly beneficial and lasting attainments at the expense of the other portions. In consequence of this law, which all history proves, if a man has succeeded in imposing his will upon his neighbors for his own selfish aggrandizement and to their harm, it presently turns out that with his seeming gain he has incurred such danger or loss that, on the whole, he has missed his own advantage. The law which he had neglected, or thought to override, has proved invincible; while, on the other hand, the man who has led the multitude for the common good wins rewards beyond even the hopes of the selfish leader. So that the same result appears when the will rules other wills as when it rules matter. The inviolable laws, under which alone success can be reached, open the way to more satisfactory results than could be attained if these laws did not exist.

Now, if we turn our attention to the will when it is struggling with the laws which it should obey, we find its condition is essentially one of ignorance. For

although the willing mind may be aware of these opposing laws, and may set itself to defeat them, it certainly is not aware of their strength and the hopelessness of its attack; and especially it is unaware of their beneficent character. These things are learned impressively only after defeat, perhaps many times repeated. But to whatever extent the mind is capable of understanding such laws and their power, to that extent it is certain that a sufficient experience of defeated endeavor will at last put an end to these useless struggles of the will. The undoubting assurance of its absolute impossibility necessarily puts an end to the willing of a given result. And this acceptance of defeat in a forbidden way is the beginning of a perception that this way has no desirable results, and that the defeat is therefore a benefit.

Therefore, the bounds which the laws of God in nature and the social world set to the will, are a bondage only of the immature and uninstructed will, while they tend by their compulsion to educate this will into its best estate; and when this is reached, the laws no longer even seem to oppose it, but are manifestly the shortest way to that which is now its only aim.

So far we have considered the action of the human will merely as an exercise of force, studying it in the two fields in which we can best observe it objectively; and we are now prepared to answer the postponed

question, why the assertion of an absolute divine will does not reduce the world to fatalism ; namely, because at every point in which the divine will touches the will of man, God aims not to compel, but to encourage and develop, our will ; so that seeming obstacles and defeats are only the means by which he brings us to learn how our will may most freely act, and may most perfectly attain the things which at our highest development we desire. It is not denied that God could place us under a rule of arbitrary fate. But he has not done this, because it would thwart his own purpose in giving us being, that we might become like him.

We come now to consider the will in man's spiritual intercourse with God. This is the religious aspect of the subject, and the part which directly concerns the present inquiry ; for the study of the will as directed towards the physical and the social worlds is pertinent only because it makes us acquainted with the action of the will where we can view it objectively, and can therefore most impartially consider it. With this third phase the subject is somewhat changed. We have hitherto looked at the power of the will to impress itself upon external objects, and the laws which help or hinder this result. But when man turns his will towards God he can no longer hope to bend this divine Object to his purposes, and our inquiry can only seek

to know how the man who wills is in this case affected by his own volitions.

But before we go farther, it is necessary clearly to understand what we mean by man's intercourse with God upon this field. Since there can be no thought of man's coercing God, the only relation possible is one of harmony or discord. In regard to some given thing the will of God and the will of man come upon the scene. It must be assumed that man can somehow know what is the will of God concerning this thing, and then the human will takes some attitude, follows some process, reaches some results in relation to the divine. Now how can man know this divine will?

We have seen that God addresses man through the experience of life and the conscience, and that whatever may claim to be a command of God necessarily comes as part of human experience, and is accredited or rejected by the conscience. There can, therefore, be no one way in which men are certified of the will of God concerning the successive details of their lives; but rather, each man's conscience decides when the circumstances of life set this or that duty before him; and this decision of conscience carefully and sincerely made is for him, then and there, the voice of God. Even if the same man should subsequently decide that his first decision was mistaken, the fact remains that until the new light came the first decision was his

highest law. The subject, therefore, upon which we now enter is the action of a man's will in response to his own conscience, this being but a clearer expression for the relation of the human will to God's.

When the will adopts for its own choice the demands of conscience, and heartily strives for those ends, this is virtue. When the will refuses the demands of conscience, this is sin. And the whole action of the will on the moral field consists of repeated choices between sin and virtue. The question whether it is able to produce objective results according to its choice is nothing to the point; for the experience of life and the teaching of the Bible alike declare that the quality of sin or virtue inheres in the volition.

When we seek the causes of the will's choice, we are first confronted with motives. Motives certainly influence the choice of the will, and it is not easy to conceive it without them; but they have no compelling power. In fact, we do not know of any power which can compel the will. It hears, weighs, and decides; and while the effect of individual motives may often be foreseen with much certainty, yet there are enough exceptional volitions which seem to set all motives at defiance, to assure us that the will is not compelled. Its decision is like a creative act of God,—a new departure.

But this consideration is incomplete, whether with

regard to God or man, until we remember that the will is not a *being*, but an attribute which is inseparably combined with others. This distinction is of the first importance, and is easily understood. The Bible, for instance, declares that "it is impossible for God to lie;" and we readily understand this as meaning, not that any collocation of words is impossible, but that the perfection and harmony of the divine nature would be so outraged by a lie, that the divine will cannot consent to it. A divine lie would be divine suicide. Now, in the same way the will of man is under the necessity of corresponding with his other attributes. We freely repel a slander against the man we trust, by insisting that he could not do such a thing. And if the accusation should prove true, we should sadly confess he was not the man we had supposed. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." Indeed, so plain is this interdependence of the will and the rest of the man, that when we see arbitrary actions repeated and continued in a way that violates the usual course of human conduct, we declare the man insane — the balance of his faculties has been destroyed. Now, in this necessary accord of the will with the other faculties lies the key to all the alleged mysteries of sin and of redemption; and to this we shall have to recur as our study of the subject proceeds.

Having well in mind these limits to the power of

motives over the will, we may now return to the study of their action. Life subjects the will to motives of various kinds, which urge it in different directions. These appeal to the intellect, to the sentiments, and to the passions of the flesh. They are so many, and form such numberless combinations, that each man's position is unique, and we can judge each other only on general principles, subject always to correction for the individual. Some of the motives re-enforce the conscience and influence the will to comply, while others tend to set will against conscience. The latter are called temptations. No man can live and escape temptations, which, indeed, constitute the real tasks of life. They arise from every department of life; and so from every side the will is urged against the conscience. Perhaps the subtlest and least remarked of temptations is that which aims merely to defy authority. We know the charm of forbidden things in daily experience; and at bottom the commands of the conscience may often be resisted for no other reason than that they are commands.

All temptations persuade the will by promising satisfactions, from the subtle one just named to the grossest lusts of the flesh. But the Bible and our own experience equally teach that these promises are fallacious. Either the satisfaction is not found at all, or it is so brief as to be worthless, or it entails pain or trouble which far outweighs it. Therefore, the seekers of im-

moral pleasure are always looking for a new pleasure, the old having speedily palled. But the combinations of life are so numerous, and the craving for immediate satisfaction is so urgent, that to each discredited temptation another succeeds, smiling with promise. On the other hand, the motives to obedience, while they promise less, yield more. Experience proves with equal certainty that the way of the transgressor is hard, and that wisdom's are ways of pleasantness. Nor are the satisfactions of virtue brief, with need of continual change; they persist and accumulate, and seem native to the soul after whatever length of enjoyment. Besides, every faculty which is exercised in the pursuit of virtue becomes stronger by the exercise, and thus ministers a new delight. So that we come here upon the same state of things which we found in the action of the will upon physical and social objects; that the law, namely, which seems to limit and deny, in reality guides the will to its most perfect exercise, and puts within its reach the greater good.

It might seem as if this covered the field of man's moral history; as if a moderate experience of good and evil, with the testimony of others who have made the same experiments, would suffice to set us all upon the side of virtue, and abolish sin. That this is not so results largely from another factor in the action of the will which we have not yet considered; namely, habit.

When a particular motive has once persuaded the will to act, the second demand of this motive is more readily obeyed, and so on till the obedience becomes habitual and of course. And this is true whether the motive tend to virtue or to sin. A recurring temptation acts upon the will, therefore, in two opposite ways: the repeated demonstration of its fallacy tends to weaken the force of the temptation, but also the repeated yielding of the will tends to lessen the degree of force required. And so it sometimes results that men, after a prolonged evil course, succumb to a temptation which allures so little, that at first they would not have regarded it; while other men, reversing the process by a steady course of resistance to some formidable temptation, come at last hardly to feel that it solicits them. And so intricate are the combinations of life, and so little can we judge another's temptations or his strength, that none can prophesy which way the balance will turn when a man is subjected to recurrent temptation. Hence has arisen the conclusion that the outcome of each man's moral experience is uncertain. Such a state of things, however, would be incompatible with the purpose which we have found God administering, and we shall see when we come to consider the dealings of God with man, that he has abundantly provided for this.

Under the present head it only remains to point out

that final element in the action of the will which constitutes the door of divine access.

The will, as we have seen, is not a being, but a faculty, and in all its healthy action it preserves a conformity to its associate faculties. Now, the man taken as a whole, is by no means indifferent between virtue and sin. He is the offspring of God, and therefore, however he may become the servant of sin, this is to the end a foreign master, while to virtue he is native. If, then, the will inclined to evil dominates the entire man, it can only be because his other elements are immature and not developed in their due proportions. If the judgment be weak and the lusts strong, the motives to gross vice will easily master the will. If the intellect be forcible and sentiment dull, the suggestions of pride and ambition will find a ready ear. Therefore, to redeem the will once addicted to sin, it is necessary to restore the balance of the man and effect a harmony of all his powers. This done, the various motives which address him will have each only its due influence, and the native affinity of the soul for good will determine his volitions. For the whole purpose of God rests on the fact that man — and every man — is so fashioned in God's image, that to whatever extent he sees things as God sees them (that is, as they are), to that extent he desires and wills concerning them what God desires and wills.

VIII.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN.

WE come now to the last grand division of biblical teaching, — the relations of man to God. By virtue of his physical nature man is subject to the care and rule which God exercises over the world; but by virtue of his spiritual being he constitutes with God a class apart, of which class there are no other members known to us. Man therefore sustains to God relations which are peculiar. The importance of these relations grows out of man's power to give or refuse consent to the will of God; and the subject may best be approached by considering God's method of dealing with the rebellious will of man; that is, with sin. This will lead us to study the whole field of Christ's work; but the first question which confronts us is how such a phenomenon can exist under the government of an almighty Ruler, whose purpose is universal harmony.

We have considered God as the Author alike of the world and of the human soul. And we found his creative energy not to be a primary force giving origin to secondary causes and then leaving these to effect their

results by some inherent power ; but it appeared that second causes are merely methods or channels through which the power of God uniformly works, so that those causes could not for an instant continue to act without his attention. Every bud, therefore, which opens in the spring, and every sparrow which falls, is moved by vital force or by gravity only in the sense that God's will produces these results by an orderly process, to which we give one or the other of these names.

Now, the same train of thought requires us to believe that every man is constituted as he is, and meets the experiences which fall to him, simply because God will have it so. Complex strains of heredity, early circumstances, example, education, are simply our apprehension and our titles of the orderly processes by which the single divine energy accomplishes its purpose. Whatever results of a man's life, therefore, are the necessary outcome of his environment acting upon his native characteristics, exist because God will have them so. Knowing the end he gave effect to the means, and therefore the end is his. But the disposal of man's will lies with himself, either to put himself in harmony with this divine procedure or to oppose it ; and there are, as we have seen, many inducements to opposition.

Now, we have found that the motive to sin always is the hope of satisfaction ; and of course the satis-

faction expected from opposing conscience is supposed to be greater than obedience can yield. Sin, therefore, is man's effort to find a course of life which will prove more satisfactory to himself than the course to which God calls him; and if it be conceivable that any soul should ever find a way to greater satisfaction than it can obtain by obedience, then, though the way might be blocked, the desire of it must remain, and eternal sin will result. But one such case in the history of the world would frustrate the purpose of God; and we can suppose him to tolerate man's efforts after a more satisfactory way than his, only because he knows no such way can be found or invented. In a word, God stakes the results of his creation and the accomplishment of his purpose on the certainty that he has made no soul but will, when it has apprehended God's way, turn eagerly from all other devices and cleave only to him. So the answer to our question, how sin can have a place under God's purpose of universal harmony, is that these experiments after a satisfaction of man's devising, will result in the more complete and eager devotion of the human will to the divine — a harmony infinitely above the compliance of ignorant assent.

But this question being answered, another difficulty presents itself, growing out of the experience of life. For it is abundantly proved that no amount and no

clearness of demonstration can bring men from sin to righteousness. It needs something more than logic that we may see as God sees. It is true that men of intelligence do often discover the mistake of the grosser vices, and avoid them from prudential reasons or from self-respect; and it is possible to conceive a human nature so constituted that the influences which we have already considered would infallibly bring it to the highest perfection possible for such a nature. Nor is it an idle fancy to discuss this; for moralists without and within the Christian Church have always been strongly bent to address themselves to this imaginary man.

Let us suppose a man consisting of reason, conscience, and will in balanced proportions. The usual experience of life must convince him that he cannot abolish the laws under which he lives, and that he can in no way make life so satisfactory as by obeying them. He will gradually become acquainted with those laws, even in their obscure parts, and will freely choose them for the ordering of his conduct. And when this process is fully worked out he will be a calm and willing follower of duty, with no besetting sins, and perfectly at home in the world. That God is his Father and men his brothers will not in the least occur to him; and so long as he has the tranquil experience which he supposes his obedience to de-

serve; neither the fortunes of men nor the Spirit of God can disturb his smooth and satisfied selfishness.

This is the wise man of the Stoics. They recognized sentiment, to be sure, as a natural weakness of man, but seem not to have doubted that a sufficiently enlightened reason would deprive it of any influence. But while the noble precepts of the Stoics show the clearness of their conscience and the sincerity of their aim, the history of the school equally shows that the real needs of men are not touched by such a philosophy. And the reason is that this conception of human nature, by ignoring sentiment, omits that very element of man's character which furnishes the ground of his highest development; and this is the point at which the salvation of Christ invincibly approaches him. But so ready is the conviction that reason is the true mistress of life, that even after the Gospel had brought what was before missing, and even among those who hold themselves acquainted with the true power of God unto salvation, this fictitious man, as the victim of sin, has still dominated almost every system of theology. And yet the missing factor in this false scheme lies upon the surface of every real life. Sentiment overthrows reason, defies conscience, masters the will; and so long as this great power is not converted to duty the law may ply all its sanctions in vain, for sin will rule.

When we examine the Bible upon this point, we find the gradual development of its teaching, from germ to perfection, quite as distinct as in any of the particulars which we have already studied. At first there are simple commands with no spoken sanction, but an implied consciousness of the greatness of the Law-giver. Later comes a gradually completed code of laws, regulating all parts of conduct. These rest on the irresistible authority of their Author; but some considerations of sentiment are added, yet only as minor helps to the more recognized motives. In the later parts of the Old Testament a diminished stress is laid on the force of explicit law, and the appeal is especially to the heart. Yet to the end the old dispensation makes no appeal to sentiment which recognizes its transcendent power, and proposes no method by which the whole man may be won to God. That souls were so won cannot be doubted; but this only shows what is everywhere obvious, that God's access to the souls of men is limited to no single method. The heart, too, has its unconscious cerebration which finds God.

When we enter upon the New Testament this defect of the Old is plainly avowed. The statement of Jesus that he came to fulfil the Law, implies that this had aimed at something not yet accomplished. And Paul expressly says that God sent his Son to doom sin,

which the Law could not do because it was weak through the flesh. These words state "the impossible of the Law," and its reason; because, namely, the passions of men were stronger than the known sanctions of the Law. And this brings us face to face with the peculiarity of the Gospel which sets it above all religions and philosophies, that ultimate sanction of duty which wins the hearts of men. The announcement of the Gospel is of peace and goodwill. The preaching of Jesus dwells on meekness, purity of heart, love of peace, on that desire for righteousness which becomes the hunger of the soul. Upon love hang all the law and the prophets. Love is greater than eloquence, knowledge, power, self-surrender. Love fulfils the law. And in this way sentiment assumes its due place as a prime factor in God's treatment of sin. The divine law is neither abolished nor weakened; on the contrary, it is strengthened and its triumph assured by that sanction which alone can reconcile the hearts of men to God, for want of which the old Law was weak; namely, the revelation of the divine goodness through Jesus Christ.

We have next to study in detail the process of salvation from sin.

IX.

THE GOSPEL STORY.

WE must begin our study of the saving work wrought by Christ, with an examination of the documents which primarily make him known to us.

The New Testament does not, like the Old, offer a progressive growth of teaching and revelation ; on the contrary, it begins with the summit of its perfection. The four Gospels contain nearly all that is told us of the teaching and life of Jesus, and the other writings are confessedly based upon this. It is of the highest importance, therefore, to estimate the value of the Gospels.

And, first of all, it must be remembered that the collective story is an ineradicable part of universal history. If by any process of reasoning we persuade ourselves that the Gospel narrative is not authentic history, a gap is left which nothing else among the records of mankind can fill, and the most remarkable revolution which has occurred to man remains, as to its causes, an unfathomable mystery. Of all the marvels found in the Gospels, there is none so marvellous as this would be.

No question can be raised that the first century witnessed the beginnings of the Christian Church. Nor is it questionable that the Church began abruptly, embodying principles of conduct which were wholly unknown a generation earlier, which proved so powerful as to alarm the civil authorities, which withstood all the force of terror or seduction applied to them, and which continue their influence to this day. It is equally certain that this movement started from Palestine under the name of Christ, and within a generation or two penetrated to all civilized countries, producing everywhere the same effects, not at all limited by race or customs, and understood by its votaries as constituting one brotherhood of them all.

The customs, laws, and literature of the world immediately preceding this outbreak have been searched in vain for any beginnings which might have led up to it; and nowhere in human history is a similar revolution to be found. The Gospel narrative, and it alone, fully accounts for this new departure and for all its peculiarities. Whatever in the movement seems inexplicable by the usual motives of human conduct finds satisfactory explanation here.

The first diffusion of Christianity preceded the records which we possess; yet everywhere we find established from the first, customs, discipline, and doctrines which necessarily imply the knowledge of that

which the Gospels relate. This primary knowledge of the facts accounts for the prompt acceptance of these writings; and in this way the Church in all lands vouched for the correctness of the Gospels as a narrative of the facts upon which the Church was built.

Turning now to the documents themselves, when we compare the four narratives, we find each peculiar, and the fourth especially distinct from the other three. But a close examination proves that the differences, so far as they deserve any consideration at all, are of emphasis, and not radical. Every peculiarity of one Gospel, even of the fourth, is somewhere touched or suggested by the others; so that innumerable millions of readers have found no stumbling-block, but have formed from the collective story a conception of the character and work of Jesus harmonious throughout. And the conciseness and simplicity of language, the selection of illustrative instances, the forcible presentation of profound truth, and the vivid portrayal of a unique character, as well as the fitness with which each Gospel supplements the others, compel us to recognize in this group of writings something beyond an accidental assemblage of contemporary works.

The process of selection among various attempted Gospels was, of course, the work of the people of God scattered through many lands. They chose and retained what most accorded with their knowledge of the

facts and their Christian consciousness of the true tone and spirit. But this does not account for the original production of such narratives ; and the specimens which remain to us of rejected lives of Jesus only raise by contrast our admiration of these. All these things considered, no one who believes that God has anywhere communicated with his people will fail to find in the production and assemblage of these four works the evident marks of his hand and purpose.

Probably the Gospel story would not have been seriously questioned but for a feature which has been gravely misunderstood in every age ; namely, its account of what are called miracles. These all have relation to Jesus, as either object or agent ; and they add to his biography an element which, when carefully studied, is found to differentiate it from the lives of all other men. In every age men have misunderstood this element of the life of Jesus, and in two ways : either by giving it such importance as to obscure the prime factors of his work, or by stumbling at it as supernatural, and endeavoring to eliminate it from his history. The first error appeared in his very presence, and was repeatedly and severely rebuked by him ; but it has survived in every age, and still flourishes. Yet we must stand by the plain teaching of Jesus, and insist that neither he nor his biographers attached this prime

importance to miracle. He presented it as the very least of his credentials, and refused every challenge to prove his authority in this way ; while the evangelists relate his miracles with a simplicity and absence of comment which prove that they took them merely as parts of a life wholly admirable. On the other hand, the desire which every Christian ought to feel to rescue the ideal Christ from the conception of a wonder-monger, and to make clear the transcendent importance of his spiritual work, reacting against the first error, has led to a school of criticism which seeks wholly to eliminate the miraculous from the New Testament narrative.

The importance of this matter is extreme ; not so much from any importance which the miracles now have for us, as from the place which they hold in the narrative. The attempt has often been made to separate from the Gospel story those parts which record miracles, as being later additions in the interest of one or another party in the early Church ; or to explain them as parabolic, and not intended to be taken for history ; or as myths unconsciously woven about simple, natural occurrences. But they are too closely connected with the other elements of the story to be foreign additions ; and the manner of their narration is so like all the rest, as to leave no doubt that the writers supposed themselves to be relating facts. This does not touch the theory of myth, which will be considered

later ; but every other theory which seeks to eject the miraculous from the Gospel narrative, impugns either the honesty of the writers or their competency as witnesses. If in these particulars they mislead or were misled, then they are insufficient witnesses in all other particulars. And this has been the decision of the Christian consciousness, which has insisted that the historical character of the Gospels must stand or fall with the truth of the miracles. Take these away and we have, indeed, all the lofty suggestions and spiritual insight of the words attributed to Jesus, but they cease to rest on any historical basis, since our only historians are discredited.

Now, this by no means takes away the worth of the Gospel teachings, so far as they commend themselves to our mind. But the force and authority of precept and promise are far greater when we see them evolved in the life-work of a historical man, when we can study his character and know him. It is not too much to say that the largest success of the Church in all ages has grown out of faith in the person of Jesus as a man like ourselves, whom we may intimately know through his memoirs.

The only theory which leaves this historical person intact, while it removes the miraculous, is the theory of myth ; by which is meant that the admiration of ignorant disciples, little by little, gave a mysterious turn to

the traditions concerning Jesus, till trifling facts were gradually converted, in all the good faith of ignorance, into open miracles; and that these myths became ingrafted upon the genuine traditions of the Church before the latter were reduced to the narratives which we possess.

But the fatal historical objection to the theory of myths, is that the known facts of the case do not allow time for their formation and diffusion. It is quite true that among zealous and ignorant men in a little community, the love of the marvellous may in a very short time evolve a wonderful story out of simple material. But it is no such state of things that we have to explain. Let us see the facts.

Within twenty-five years of the crucifixion of Jesus, Paul wrote four letters, which remain to us, and which are admitted to be genuine by the most destructive criticism; namely, the Romans, the two Corinthians, and the Galatians. These letters are addressed to communities of Christians, widely separated, but all acknowledging one brotherhood, so that the apostle addresses them all as of one faith. How they had been converted we do not accurately know; but the process had involved no broad variations of doctrine or of discipline: there was, twenty-five years after the crucifixion, a Christian Church with a Christian faith, everywhere essentially the same. To these brethren

Paul sends greeting, reproof, instruction, encouragement; and he bases these upon a certain history of the life of Jesus, which he assumes to be familiar to them all and undisputed. A fair outline of the Gospel narrative may be gathered from the allusions to Jesus in these four letters; and when gathered it is, in outline, exactly the story of the four Gospels. Our Gospels, indeed, were not yet written; but the Christian faith was planted far and wide, and wherever it existed it was based on the acceptance of the very facts which constitute these Gospels. The biography of Jesus and the faith which saves had gone hand in hand all over the civilized world within twenty-five years of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Now, the theory of myth requires us to believe one of two things: *First*, we may be asked to believe that the alleged myths had been elaborated and firmly fixed in the belief of the faithful before the diffusion began. But we know that this began a few months after the death of Jesus, and proceeded continuously. The time, therefore, is lacking for any growth of myth as part of the tradition of the Church before it dispersed from the centre in Palestine. *Second*, it may be claimed that these myths had slowly grown up during the interval between the crucifixion and the compilation of our Gospels, and that with these documents they were diffused throughout the Church. This, of course, im-

plies that the original story of the life of Jesus, on which the first diffusion of Christianity was based, contained no assertion of miracles, and that these were added to the belief of the Church a generation or two later. It could not be imagined that such myths had grown up separately among the believers in different lands, for the narratives are all of one cast, and all bear distinctly Jewish characteristics. We should, therefore, have to believe that our Gospels, having originated in Palestine, or at least drawn their materials from that land, one or two generations after the events, and containing the myths which had there grown up, were spread throughout the Roman Empire, and obtained universal assent among the churches long since planted. So that a vast multitude of Christians of every grade, standing, and intelligence, received this new and important element, and incorporated it into the faith which they had learned many years before, with entire and uniform acquiescence.

But this is not all. Such a change would have been as great a revolution as it is now proposed to effect in the faith of Christendom by eliminating the miraculous ; and yet we are asked to believe that it was accomplished without leaving in the literature of the time, or in any traditions subsequently embodied in literature, the slightest mention or trace. We know much of early dissent, but we know nothing of any

protest against such an incursion of Oriental myths. To any mind accustomed to study the past from the historical standpoint, these considerations absolutely forbid the idea that the accounts of miracle are a mythical element introduced at a late day into the Gospel narrative; and the conclusion is forced upon us, that when the disciples were first scattered by the persecution which followed the death of Stephen, they carried with them to all lands a story of the life of Jesus which contained the same element of miracle as do our Gospels.

Of course this does not guarantee every account of miracle which may be found in the documents as we now possess them. These are subject to honest criticism, which will ultimately decide what are, and if any are not, authentic parts of the history. In fact, some of them seem much less certainly parts of the Gospel story than others. And when historical criticism shall have learned to deal with these questions in perfect fairness,—that is, when the critics have learned that modern science peremptorily forbids the rejection upon *a priori* grounds of any alleged phenomena, however strange,—then we may with confidence accept their verdict, deliberately rendered, as to whether each separate narrative of miracle is or is not part of the original history. All that is here urged is, that when the Gospels appeared, the accounts of miracle which they con-

tained must have been already familiar to Christians all over the world; and that their ready acceptance under these circumstances is adequate historical evidence of the truth of these accounts.

Since, then, the Gospels are an inseparable part of human history, and since the miraculous element is an ineradicable part of the Gospel narrative, it follows that the miracles stand for us on the same footing as any other facts of experience attested by competent witnesses. In daily experience we accept such facts whether we can explain them or not; and when we can satisfy ourselves with some explanation, we do not ask whether the witnesses gave the same explanation. It is their business to tell what they have witnessed, and their hearers may be far more competent than they to find the explanation. But in the case of the Gospel miracles, the witnesses attempt no explanation beyond that which sufficed them for all facts,—they were wrought by the power of God. This, which is to us the first postulate of all being, is no explanation in that sense which we have in mind; namely, such an understanding of particular facts as shall show their harmony with their surroundings.

We therefore confront attested and surprising facts for which no explanation is offered. And yet the vast majority of minds rest here, and that whether they accept or reject the miracles. These, they say, are

reported violations of the laws of nature. Therefore, on the one hand they are asserted to be false because impossible ; and on the other hand to be true, indeed, but capable of no explanation beyond God's will. But to call miracles a violation of the laws of nature, is to be misled by a phrase. The laws of nature are merely what we have observed to be the course of procedure in natural things ; and as observation advances, the conception of these laws has continually to be enlarged, sometimes to be widely altered. So that the real student of nature is slow to pronounce upon exceptional cases, and expects to find some day that the law covers them too.

With regard, therefore, to the explanation of natural phenomena there are three attitudes of mind. Many familiar facts seem of obvious explanation, so that we are content to accept them as matters of course, wholly without mystery. Other things, no less certainly true, elude all explanation ; they recur again and again ; there can be no doubt of their authenticity : but all attempts to classify them under recognized laws of nature are merely hypothetical ; or sometimes a hypothesis can hardly be framed. The third class consists of all phenomena which lie between these extremes. Their classification is attempted, but is debatable ; and now they seem to approach, now to evade, a satisfactory explanation. But while these three atti-

tudes of mind necessarily exist in regard to individual phenomena, science is rooted in the assurance that all nature is one, and that for every fact there are relations, however hidden, which ally it in harmony with all besides. Therefore, as facts accumulate and the unwearied study of their relations more and more succeeds, phenomena gradually move from the extreme of mystery into the middle-ground of plausible conjecture, and again into the class of things fully understood. At the same time, what has long been considered fully known, sometimes develops new and unexplained phases, and drops back among the half-known or the unaccountable.

Now, all this is cited to urge the truth that our acceptance of the miracles as facts has no connection with our power or inability to explain them. They are or they are not facts according to the evidence which authenticates them. If we think we can perfectly explain them, they are not at all more firmly established thereby; and if we find them hopelessly mysterious, we are not therefore in the least degree absolved from accepting them as facts. Nor can any relation to doctrine, or any place in a scheme of theology, increase or diminish the urgency of the evidence on which they rest. The truth or falsity is to stand wholly on the evidence adduced. And to say that no amount of testimony can authenticate an occurrence because it

disagrees with our previous experience, is to arrest the progress of the human mind and abandon all scientific inquiry.

By the force of evidence, then, we are compelled to accept the miraculous as unquestionably interwoven with the life of Jesus. But this commits us to no definition of the term "miraculous;" and it is here used in its etymological sense of wonderful or mysterious. It covers a group of attested facts which still lie at the unexplained extremity of our knowledge. But certain suggestions grow out of the fact that we find these phenomena associated with Jesus.

The first point is, that all the miracles of the New Testament attach to the person of Jesus as either agent or object. There are, indeed, miracles attributed to others; but these are the persons who received the work from his hands and carried it forward in his name. They do not merely attribute their miracles to the power of God, as Jews habitually did all events, but they expressly invoke the name of Jesus, and disclaim all power without him. If we believe as these men did, and as Christians in all ages have believed, that Christ has been as really the central power of his Church since his death as before, we may well say that the miracles of the apostles were connected directly with him. But the apostolic miracles are few and, as

compared with those of Jesus, unimportant. We may disregard them for our present purpose, and fix our attention on the latter.

This association with the person and the work of Jesus gives the miracles of the New Testament a clearness of historic character not to be accorded to those of the Old. The latter lose so much of the air of history from the uncertain authorship of the books which record them, from the want of precision in the narratives, and from lack of connection with any history otherwise authenticated, that those who credit them must depend rather on their inherent probability than on any body of testimony which might compel belief. And the greater part of this inherent probability, perhaps, is reflected back upon the Old Testament narratives from those of the New.

The second point is, that all the miracles of Jesus belong to the physical world. This is essentially a modern view. It was not imagined, and could not have been understood by his contemporaries. The very large proportion of them which consist in curing neurotic diseases, were understood by those who witnessed them as an exercise of control over evil spirits, and therefore as outside the natural world. But modern pathology claims all such disorders as caused by physical lesions, however obscure these may be. Accordingly, we may say that the miracles of Jesus mark

his relations to the natural world. Now, we have found him unique in whatever relations we have studied, in relation to God or to man, to his teaching of wisdom or his conduct of life. It need not, then, surprise us to find him unlike other men in his relations to physical things.

But in each case we have found his distinction from other men to involve no radical unlikeness. He does not differ from us as one order of animate beings differs from another, with unsurmountable barriers ; but he differs from all of us, as we differ among ourselves, in the extension and co-ordination of faculties and powers. No matter how far beyond human experience he may appear in any particular, there is always a like element in other men, which might conceivably grow to match its fulness in Jesus. He is not on any side nor in any respect shut off from us by boundary lines. He is at the summit of development, and we tend towards him. Now, it grows more and more certain that man has rudimental powers of controlling the physical world which are as yet but little developed. Still, if the highest scientific attainments of this age be compared with the attitude towards nature of the contemporaries of Jesus, it may perhaps be judged that we are but little farther from being able to reproduce his miracles than the men who witnessed these were from our achievements.

Without pressing any such comparison, it may at least be said that the enormous progress of man's dominion over the physical world makes room for the suggestion that the powers of the perfect man may normally extend to the instantaneous healing of disease, and even to the resuscitation of certain of the dead. The view presented here — but only in the form of suggestion — is that the perfection of manhood in Jesus included as a normal part such a domination of the spiritual over the physical as is shown in his miracles; and that this is so far from violating any natural laws, that any other man developed to equal eminence would possess equal powers by the very constitution of the world.

This view of the miraculous in Jesus completes the picture of him as the perfect and supreme man; and we are now prepared to take up the study of that saving work in which he is the central figure.

X.

THE WORK OF CHRIST ON MAN.

THE work of Christ upon man may be viewed from two sides,—the divine and the human. The first shows us that which his work intends for man, and the last, that which man experiences under its operation. Of course under the government of God the intent and the result must be the same ; and Christian thinkers have been led far astray by forgetting this obvious fact. But if this is fully remembered, we are helped to a clearer view of the great work by studying it in the two directions.

Taking up first the divine side, we may consider the object, the means, and the method of Christ's work.

The New Testament leaves us in no doubt as to the object at which Christ aims. God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world ; that is, to effect the deliverance of men from those conditions which oppress and endanger their spiritual life. These may all be grouped as sorrow and sin. The formal thinking upon Christ's work deals much the more with salvation from sin ; as it is natural in the heat of conflict to think more of

victory than of peace. But when we try to grasp the full results of his great work, our thought is of faces from which all tears are wiped, and of hearts that rejoice. Christ the Consoler is the noblest, as he is the most beloved, figure in the annals of man; and God has given no other grace to his struggling children so powerful or so sweet as the privilege of knowing, when our hearts are burdened with the sorrows of life, whether our own or others', that Christ has comfort for us while they last, and in the end will take them all away.

Jesus came also to save his people from their sins. This aim is never lost from sight; nothing takes its place. But it is not a new aim. The later parts of the Old Testament avow the same intent on the part of God; and the New Testament writers recognized that the Mosaic dispensation was given for this purpose. But they also claim that the Law was not able to accomplish deliverance from sin, and profess to teach in Christ the only way. They certainly do not mean by this that the Law did nothing effectual to this end; nor that under the Law no men were delivered from sin. They are speaking of the inadequacy of the Law to reach all men, or to perform the perfect work of salvation on any man; and they condemn it only in view of the exceeding breadth of God's purpose. No stigma is put upon the Law as related to its own time

and office. Its work was done, and it must yield to more effectual means of grace.

To comprehend this object of Christ, we must try to understand the full meaning of deliverance from sin as the New Testament teaches it.

In hardly anything does the progressive character of the Bible more strikingly appear than in its conceptions of sin. At first sin is disobedience to prescribed law ; later, it is unfaithfulness to recognized though unformulated duty. But in the New Testament sin is always made to consist in opposition of the will to God. And since harmony of man with God is the divine purpose, sin is the one great obstacle to this purpose, and Christ must necessarily assume the removal of sin as the object of his mission. But we have seen that the will cannot fully and freely act out of accord with the other associate faculties of human nature ; and therefore the effort to harmonize the will with God must aim to harmonize the whole man with him.

This is not obscurely stated in the New Testament, and it has forced itself into notice in the practical work of the Church ; but the studies of Christian thinkers have singularly wandered from this great truth, and have contemplated sin as something ingrafted on the otherwise pure nature of man by which this is held in bondage, and which therefore is a thing by itself, to

be separated and removed. This has reduced the conception of saving men to narrow and technical limits; has, in fact, made it sometimes almost a mechanical process. Over against this stands the plain teaching of the New Testament and of practical effort, that the salvation which Christ effects in men is a development of right character. What is called the forensic attitude of the sinner before God is a mere fiction of the theological imagination; it is not taught in the Bible, and it does not correspond to the facts of life. It was introduced to the Church by the earlier Latin writers, and by them was borrowed from the jurisprudence of the Roman Empire. But God is not our Emperor, he is our Father; and he deals with us to no other end than that we may become partakers of his holiness. Nor is sin a series of misdeeds, nor a record of past transgressions. Sin is, in its essence, a defect of character; and neither man nor God can save the sinner in any other way than by developing into harmonious perfection those possibilities of his nature by which man bears forever the image of God. At whatever phase of salvation we may look, into whatever details our examination may lead us, this essential meaning is to be kept in view as the basis of the whole discussion.

Christ, therefore, came to preside over the education of man in every department of his being. Ac-

cordingly, we must conceive the whole body of our Christian civilization as being not merely a concurrent or subsidiary result of the Gospel, but an integral, intended, indispensable part of the work of Christ.

Taken, therefore, in its full scope, the aim of this work is the salvation of the entire human race. The appeal is necessarily to individuals, and it is one by one that men must be converted ; but so close are the bonds of sympathy and kindred, that no man can be fully saved alone. Some taint must cling to him from his unsaved neighbor, — some defect of knowledge or bias of thought, some clouding or struggling of conscience, at least some wounded affections which will not let him share the peace of God. And all study of the operation of Christ upon single men must consciously refer to this universal solidarity of the human race. This inseparable unity of human interests brings us to the first of the agencies by which Christ is saving the world, — human society so far as it is already Christianized.

It is a commonplace to speak of the influence of each man's character on his associates ; and we all know how much this gains when many persons of similar disposition exert their influence in common. This is true of all character, but it grows in force as character rises in excellence. In the moral world the

infection of health is the most powerful. Nor does this depend on formulated doctrines or any intellectual drill ; when the work is at its best, neither those who give nor those who take think how the process is carried on. It is by contact of soul with soul : “ *The life is the light of men.*”

Therefore in the work of Christian missions by which the Gospel has been carried abroad, it has been found wise to establish colonies of believers, who should not only preach the doctrines of Christ but should demonstrate the Christian life to those they would convert. The industrial and medical education of missionaries, the founding of mission schools, the requirement of the order and decencies of civilized life, colleges of letters and of science, the reduction of savage tongues to alphabetical and literary precision, are not to be considered convenient adjuncts of Gospel work, but as much integral parts of the conversion of the world as catechism, or worship, or ordinances. And if this is true among the heathen, it is no less true at home. Whatever makes for the higher life does not merely help, but helps to constitute, the coming of the kingdom of righteousness. Government at once humane and just, wiser education, purer living, happier homes, less selfish business, advancing freedom, science, invention, literature, art, — all these are constituent parts of the growing dominion of Christ.

If we look towards the past, they are his trophies ; if we look towards the future, they are his means. Nor is this meant in some general sense, but in the strictest historical verity. If the key-note of science is the pursuit of truth without solicitude for its source or its consequences ; if the basis of wise politics is the recognition of fundamental worth and rights in man ; if the germ of true social order is the equal validity of sentiment and reason ; then are these three elements of high civilization traceable directly to the influence of the Gospel. They were, of course, not wholly unsuggested before, but the Gospel first brought them into prominence and gave them to men.

And this fact brings into view with extreme clearness the universality of the Gospel. There have been four great civilizations — the Chinese, the Indian, the Western Asian, and the Græco-Roman — which preceded the Christian by many centuries, and each of which has embraced, perhaps, an equally great population. But ours alone is built upon a demonstrable principle which has presided over its organization and characterizes all its parts. So that with all its complexity the Christian civilization, in whatever lands, has peculiarities which the dullest know at sight, and which sharply distinguish it from all others, ancient or modern. And these peculiarities are traceable to the constant influence of the Gospel upon its origin and

growth. One of these is that which is called upon the business side enterprise, and on the religious side the missionary spirit. By virtue of this the Christian civilization has pushed its way over all the earth. It brings its own peculiarities into contact with all other social conditions, asserts its own superiority, and in the end has never failed to make good the assertion. In this way the daughter of the Gospel has forced the Gospel — often sadly disfigured — upon the attention of all mankind; and in spite of the unworthy lives which have misrepresented it, the Christian civilization has won the respect and roused the imitation of all men, civilized or savage. And ample experience proves that where the daughter has found entrance, the mother can in time make good her footing, and establish her sway.

To omit, therefore, any element of civil enlightenment from the list of agencies by which Christ is bringing the world to God, would be a fatal narrowness of view. Nor are we to be disturbed because with all that is good in these things there is mixed so much that is wrong. The very process of salvation consists in the interpenetration of the good into the midst of the evil. No numerical computation can at any stage be made of the extent to which the world is already saved; for, as we have seen, no man can be wholly in

harmony with God till all are reached; and in communities and individuals the tares and the wheat must grow together. The true illustration of the process, however, is the parable of the leaven, in which no part is ready for the baking till the whole mass is raised. Instead, therefore, of mourning the weakness and evil that still impair what is best among men, we are to reverse the point of view. We are to rejoice that through all the evil and weakness of the world, a gigantic mass, the beginnings of better things are so mingled, that in contact with every wrong lies something right; and that the work of Christ, evident in these beginnings, is mighty and must prevail.

XI.

THE CHURCH.

THE consideration of the Church, the next of Christ's agencies, grows directly out of what has preceded. For we must carefully avoid any view of the Church which marks it off from the world. This is the scholastic view, and finds no verification in experience. Whatever efforts have been made to segregate the disciples from the world have necessarily failed. Even when a physical separation has been attempted, it has been found necessary to retain connecting links with human society; and to whatever extent the separation was effected, to that extent the spiritual life of the votaries grew childish and formal, a futile struggle with imaginary difficulties. But these are quite exceptional cases. In general, the members of the Church have of necessity remained members of the civil community. It has been impossible to draw any line which should separate their duties, their fortunes, their social relations as Christians, from those they sustained as citizens. Almost everywhere theory has aimed at this separation and professed it; almost nowhere have the keen eyes of onlookers been able to see it.

And what experience has found is exactly what our studies would lead us to expect. Since the daily life of man is God's ordinary medium of communication, and since all that is already won to him or tending towards him is commissioned to act upon the evil with which it is necessarily in contact, the Church cannot be, and ought not to be, set apart from this allied field of activity. For the Church is the focal point at which combine all those persons and agencies that are consciously bent upon serving God and drawing men to him. It is Christ's institution. And institutions are but organized forms of combined effort. What, therefore, the scattered agencies of good in the world are doing under Christ's hand, with little consciousness of his leading, the Church sets herself to do with full intent. To the augmented power of many acting together, she adds the re-enforcement of careful preparation, and the wise co-ordination and distribution of work.

But far deeper than this is the fact that every institution has some fundamental principle out of which all its life and work proceed. And the basic principle of the Church is the consciousness of Christian brotherhood.

When the disciples assembled in secrecy and in fear after the death of Jesus, it was because their terrible loss made them more necessary to each other ; and at

the same time their common religious faith united them in prayer. And here appeared that which in all its history has been the vital centre of the Church, out of which all its life has flowed, — the common worship of the Christian brotherhood. The Church has wandered wide and far, has partaken in every degree of worldly frailty, has found her duty and her pleasure in a thousand varying forms, but she has never ceased to hold as the first of her functions the common worship of the brethren.

Like all that belongs to the Gospel, this had already been suggested. The Synagogue was the forerunner of the Church. The assembled Christians came presently to recognize themselves as the people of God. At first they did not wholly break away from their Jewish preconceptions ; but after a little the consciousness was born that Christ had widened the narrowness of Moses to embrace all who would believe. And two generations had not passed before the conviction was fixed in the Church that she was on the one hand the seed of Abraham's faith and heir of the promises, while on the other hand, all barriers were levelled, and whosoever would might take of the water of life freely. The universal religion being come, the universal organization was begun.

We are not here concerned to trace the countless forms which the Church has assumed. No one of

them has the special warrant of the New Testament, though all have claimed it. The fact is, that the Church has very largely taken her structure in every age from the circumstances of social life surrounding her, and especially from the civil government under which she lived. Her history covers the entire scale, from the purest democracy to the strictest monarchy. But however great the influence of these forms, they have still been superficial and transient, while the permanent and all-animating vitality which made them possible and used them, flowed always from the hearts of God's people blended in worship.

It is of the essence of the Gospel that the Church should seek for more than her own edification ; she has special duties, and the first was laid upon her by definite command of her risen Lord. It was the diffusion of the Gospel. Methods and order were left to the wisdom of the faithful and the guidance of the Holy Spirit ; but somehow, and constantly, the good news which they held as stewards must be spread abroad. It is not necessary to insist that this is an ineradicable first principle of Gospel work. The Church has never under any form or any corruption, lost sight of it or long neglected it ; and the nineteenth century has seen efforts and successes in this field which only the first century has surpassed.

Beyond this no specific command was laid upon the Church, but her work promptly developed in two other directions. The first was a supervision of the charities of believers. We do not read that pressure was needed to urge the brethren to this duty. The only word concerns the disposal of that which was given as of course. Indeed, it is to be noticed that Jesus, in this as in many other things, relied on the sure response of the human heart when once it should be touched by his Spirit. He teaches charity, and he practised it on the most splendid scale; but he does not discourse of it as something new or difficult. He has no conception that a man can love God without loving his brother also. And the centuries have justified his confidence. The Church at times has been stained with wantonness and greed, but she has never ceased to profess, and somehow to practise, the duty of organized charity.

A third function which the Church early assumed and has ever since asserted, grew out of an equal zeal, but not according to knowledge. It was the function of discipline, and was addressed at first to morals. When it had come to be perceived that the Gospel was equally the heritage of the gentiles, a great danger arose that the Church might split into Grecian and Jewish factions on the question of ceremonial observances. The apostles, therefore, as recognized heads

of the organization, formulated a minimum of requirements which they hoped would keep the gentiles from wholly outraging the sensibilities of their Jewish brethren, and, at the same time, relieve the former of the heavy yoke of the Law.

It cannot be said that the effort was successful. The division persisted so long as there continued to be Christians of Jewish education. Of the four requirements, two, abstention from things strangled and from blood, are no more heard of, and nobody dreams of their being obligatory upon Christians. The avoidance of meats offered to idols might, it would seem, have been left where St. Paul puts it, — with the conscience and good sense of believers. And chastity is so little amenable to compulsion, and so native to the Christian animus, that the amazing victory which the Gospel has won in its behalf is to be traced wholly to the Christian conscience, and not at all to ecclesiastical constraint. Indeed, it is instructive to notice that the times and lands in which the Church has developed the greatest power of compulsive discipline have, with few exceptions, been those in which chastity has been least respected. And a review of all ages would show the same facts, for outward compulsion is alien to the spirit of the Gospel. If we look at those instructions of Christ which are appealed to as the warrant for ecclesiastical discipline, we find nothing which

deserves this name. On the contrary, we find directions to deal patiently with one who has by his acts renounced the brotherhood, and if he persevere in his renouncement, to let him go.

With analogous purpose the Church has attempted a discipline of belief. The circumstances of the first age hardly suggested this. The few traces of it in the writings of St. Paul are rather the earnest remonstrances of a brother than the commands of a prelate. But as soon as active minds began to reduce the belief of Christians to formulas, they of course differed, and those in authority, solicitous for the continued purity of the faith, promulgated creeds and denounced heresies.

It is needless to recount the long warfare of the creeds. The manner and spirit of it have been for the most part unchristian and disastrous. Looking back on some of the bitterest struggles, a modern Christian can see no choice between the contestants. Nor can we now admit that it is a legitimate office of the Church to prescribe tenets of belief. The common source of belief to all Christians must be the teaching of Christ's word and life as they are recorded in the New Testament; and the office of learning and deciding what is there taught belongs to each man for himself. Under such a law of liberty there will always be many different interpretations of the Gospel, and men

will naturally group themselves according to these views, as did the Jewish and the gentile believers of the initial Church. We need only to remember that since these differences of belief are clearly within the rights of those who hold them, they make no infraction of the bond of brotherhood; so that while the churches must always be many and various, the Church is one, and the fruits of the Spirit are its only tests of membership. But alike to the churches and the Church must ever be denied the right so long asserted, of prescribing under compulsion the belief of Christians.

But those who enjoy the theological freedom of our day should no more imagine that their privileges could have been won without the struggles of the past, than should the heirs of civil liberty. The warfare of the creeds has been in tumult, and with garments rolled in blood; but this was the stern condition of evils to be conquered, and not otherwise could the large thought of to-day have found place.

A fourth great division of the Church's work has gradually grown into prominence, that of instruction. Of course the diffusion of the Gospel always implied instruction for new hearers, and crises would at times occur when further teaching was needed; but the apostolic conception was so simple that no elaborate provision for sustained instruction seems to have been

thought necessary. The next centuries developed the sermon, and careful teaching for the young; but as the darkness of the Middle Ages shut in, this function fell into neglect, or was so perverted as to frustrate its original purpose. With the intellectual revival and the Reformation, the first place was given among Protestants, and an important one among Catholics, to elaborate sermons; and more recently the Sunday-school, the prayer-meeting, the class-meeting, and other customs have grown into use.

Now, all that we need here notice is, that, while instruction must necessarily be a function of the Church as long as any are uninstructed, none of these forms of instruction are essential. They are the outcome of the Christian sense under special circumstances; and if altered conditions shall suggest other methods as better, or if any group of Christians shall come to exist who need no formal instruction, and who dispense with it, neither the validity nor the usefulness of the Church can suffer thereby.

This would be the place, if there were occasion, to discuss ecclesiastical organization, worship, and the sacraments. But our conception relegates all these to subordinate places. As has been said, no form of organization is prescribed in the New Testament. No such form has been or could possibly be permanent, because the growth which is essential to everything

human would be impossible with unvarying modes of expression. By retaining old names in new meanings an appearance of permanence has been given to ecclesiastical institutions; but, when the significance of these is studied historically, it is found that successive generations have so differently understood things called by the same name, that the permanence is merely nominal. As in all other fields, the church which lives grows; and a growing church surrounded by a growing community must, as a condition of its growth, remain always at liberty to revise or change the methods and processes which express its life. All forms of ecclesiastical organization, therefore, whether for worship or for work, must be the free outgrowth of the spiritual and social conditions to which they have relation.

As regards the sacraments, it is startling to contrast the enormous importance which the Church has attached to them, with the simplicity of their appearance in the New Testament. A symbol borrowed to give visible expression to the penitence of converts, and a farewell supper touched with the tenderest pathos of remembrance, have been fashioned into ecclesiastical machinery which should move the gates of heaven and of hell. That which is of the greatest importance concerning them is that they be restored to their primitive simplicity of meaning. So far as Christian souls can

find in them helpful suggestion and spiritual quickening, they may be fitly classed among the minor agencies of the Church ; but they are far from taking rank with instruction, or work, or prayer.

To gather now into one conception the result of these studies, we find the Church to be essentially the Christian brotherhood ; habitually assembled for worship in such groups as may be practicable ; organized to carry on the work of the Lord under whatever constitution, and by whatever methods, its own judgment may at each period prefer ; striving to spread the Gospel, to succor the needy, to preach righteousness, to proclaim the truth, and, by all these means, itself to grow in grace.

XII.

THE BIBLE.

TO the next of the agencies of Christ, the Bible, we have already given some study. It will be necessary here to combine a brief recapitulation with some additional considerations.

The Bible, we found, although composed of many writings, constitutes a unity, and has, as a whole, an impressive history of many centuries. Around it have gathered the best thinking and the best living of mankind. It is not, therefore, to be judged *de novo* by the standards of one age, much less of one school or individual; but in any judgment passed upon it, all the facts of its prolonged influence and its wide acceptance are to be accounted for.

The Bible, too, is a book of daily human life. It was not a scholastic production; it does not deal in abstractions or theories; it never departs very far, and seldom at all, from that instruction which their daily experience offers to men. The tests of the Bible, therefore, are not to be applied in the closet; but it must be judged according to the results of its use by common men under familiar circumstances. And this is emphasized by the fact that all sorts and conditions of

men have, in every age in which they have had access to it, found that the Bible has a special word for each of them. No result of its study tends more to exalt our reverence for the Bible than this fact. When the search for systems of doctrine is dropped, and its pages are read under the pressure of daily concerns for daily guidance, it is always found that this book contains some word of comfort, of teaching, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, which satisfies the seeker. Nor does the purport of that which each man thus finds for himself differ greatly from the results of his neighbor's search.

Now, in the light of these considerations we may ask, what is the authority of the Bible? On what does its authority rest, and what is its extent, whether in force or scope? We have found that the highest authority for each man at any crisis is the decision of his own conscience, guided by all the light it receives from every source. Therefore, the deepest impression of authority residing in the Bible is received when conscience seizes upon its utterances and urges them as obligatory; or when the troubled soul finds in them peace and rest. But since the same thing would be true of any word from any source which might give the same impressions, while a special objective authority is customarily claimed for the Bible, our question calls for an answer from this point of view.

All that we can infer from the history of its use confirms the conclusion reached by studying its origin; namely, the Bible commands our respect because it summarizes the wisdom which God teaches to men through the experience of life. It was produced by a long succession of men, eminent at once for their familiarity with the things of the Spirit, and for the highest success in the conduct of life. And what these men produced has received the indorsement of the people of God, age after age.

Scholastic theology, to be sure, has been far from resting in any such conclusion. The earliest dogmatizing period of the Church was led by many influences to set the kingdom of God over against the world as an antagonist; it even seemed to find warrant for this in the words of Christ; and this made it necessary to conceive a channel of divine authority wholly independent of daily life. It was therefore asserted that God impressed his truth directly upon the minds of those whom he chose as his mouthpieces, by some psychological process peculiar to this operation; and that the message of such men, whether spoken or written, whether in their own age or at any subsequent time, was for this reason to be received as the direct and authoritative word of God, without the least need of confirmation from temporal affairs. And different branches of the Church have located this authority

either in the apostles and their alleged successors, or in the writers of the Bible.

Now we shall see, when we come to study the Holy Spirit, that a direct divine influence upon the spiritual nature of individuals must be accepted as an occasional fact of experience ; and we shall presently consider how far this may be thought to have taken part in the production of the Bible. But what concerns us at this moment is that no such supposition can so authenticate God's word in the Bible as to remove the need of verification by the conscience. No authority thus derived can have any objective force ; for if God has thus spoken to a man, other men can know it, aside from some external sanction, only by the man's own report. And the history of mankind has such a lamentable record of self-delusion and fraud under this head, that the assertion counts for nothing, with judicious minds, until it is confirmed either by the proved character of the claimant, or by the judgment of others upon his message, or by both.

But the need of this authentication is exactly what the theory seeks to avoid ; and to escape the difficulty, confirmation has been sought from a special series of occurrences in the material field, called miracles. These, it has been alleged, being wholly aside from the usual experience of men, and yet intimately connected with human life, give just the witness needed of divine

communication through special channels. We have already studied the subject of miracles, but it may be added that the miraculous attestation of divine revelation has now lost its force with intelligent minds. As phenomena, the occurrences may indeed be established, but this by no means establishes for them a claim to be considered special instances of divine interference. Indeed, the high development of mind necessary to determine whether given events are, or are not, within the normal range of man's experience, finds itself so able to estimate upon other grounds the claims of any asserted revelation, that miracles become, for this purpose, superfluous. In other words, the miraculous can only authenticate a divine revelation for those minds which are incompetent to judge either of the revelation or of the miracle.

But even when the miracles are no longer urged as the warrant of the Bible, it is still claimed that the book is itself a miracle, because it owes its origin to a special divine interference with the action of the writers' minds, namely, inspiration. As has been said, such a divine participation in the production of the Bible may well have occurred, and we must, therefore, study the subject of inspiration. And it will illuminate the whole subject if we begin by distinguishing between the facts of inspiration, and the theories which seek to explain it.

The facts may be stated as follows: For three thousand years there has been a portion of the human race who may be called the People of God, because, of whatever race or culture, they have always excelled their contemporaries in the power of so apprehending spiritual things as to apply them with success to the conduct of life. That is to say, the people of God have always been, for their time, experts in spiritual things. Now, these experts, through all their three thousand years, have agreed in declaring that parts or the whole of the Bible differ from all other literature; that the difference consists in peculiar fitness for ministering to the spiritual needs of men; and that this difference was caused by a special participation of God in the production of these writings. These three ideas combined constitute the meaning of inspiration as applied to the Bible; and the consenting judgment of so many experts establishes such biblical inspiration as a fact.

It may indeed be freely granted that much of this consensus has been merely acquiescence in the opinion of others, that comparatively little of it has been based on critical study, and that, however real each man's consciousness may make it for him, it can be presented to others only as opinion. But the foundations of the most important human interests rest on no other ground. It is such long continued harmony of judg-

ment, even of uncritical judgment, on which rest the primary postulates of ethics, the most valued axioms of political organization, and some of the canons of art. So that it is no more an assumption to say that the Bible is inspired, than to claim that children owe obedience to parents, or that the citizen is entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In the face of such authority the adverse opinion of an individual or a group no more invalidates the postulate of inspiration than it would the political or the ethical.

But when we have asserted inspiration as a fact, many questions still remain open upon which there has been no general agreement among the people of God, and the answers to which constitute the various theories of inspiration. These mainly seek to answer the two questions, to what extent, and by what process, did the divine participation take place? But we shall, perhaps, best reach such an understanding of the subject as our purpose requires, if we do not attempt to keep the two questions distinct, but proceed by a course of inquiry different from that which is usual. For it is customary to attempt the psychological analysis of the mind's action under inspiration, and to seek the exact method of contact between the human and the divine. But this is necessarily speculative, since no man who is generally credited with inspiration has left an account of his inspired mood.

The surer way seems to be to examine the inspired writings, and discover in what particulars they differ from analogous writings for which inspiration is not claimed; and then to ascertain, if we can, what modification of well-known faculties would be necessary to produce these differences. If we find modifications needed, and can guess by what mode of divine action they might be effected, this will bring us to the position of the psychologists, but with the advantage of much preliminary information. If, on the other hand, a different conclusion is reached, the whole subject will be much simplified.

Inspiration, if we take the word in its broadest sense, has been held to affect the deliverances of the biblical writers, as regards, on the one hand, man's external, and on the other, his spiritual, concerns. The former field includes the announcement of a moral law, and unerring accuracy in the statement of events, whether historical or prophetic. The latter comprises the expression of spiritual experiences, and the revelation of theological truth. We must consider these four topics in the order named.

We have already studied the process by which the moral law of the Bible came gradually to exist, gathered from special experiences of life by the consciences of special men, and approved amid all the circumstances

of the general life of God's people by the general conscience. It is therefore the law of God who ordered the life out of which it was learned, and gave their native qualifications to the men who formulated it. No doctrine of a peculiar, transient influence can add anything to the divineness of such an origin.

The second claim for inspiration is that of unerring accuracy in the statement of events, whether past or future. As regards history, the test of this claim — which is nowhere made in the Bible — lies with the science of historical criticism, to which this book is, of course, as amenable as any other. And the results of such testing seem to be that, while the historical parts of the Bible are certainly not without errors, yet they contain history of a very high order, both for accuracy of statement and clearness of presentation. Indeed, if each book be judged by the best of other historical compositions contemporaneous with it, the Bible will, in every case, be found to equal, if not to excel, its rivals. If any reservation must be made, it is only in the matter of literary style, and that only in the New Testament. All this indicates minds of the first order in the authors, but it calls for no special divine impulse.

Perhaps it is for the prediction of coming events that inspiration has been most confidently claimed; and here again historical criticism must largely de-

cide, for both the utterance and the fulfilment of the prophecies now fall within the historic field. Much labor has been spent upon this subject, but it does not appear that any perfectly unbiassed survey of the whole field of biblical prophecy has yet been made. Some tendency to magnify or to belittle seems always present. It appears not certain that we can point to any prophecy concerning temporal affairs, which can be proved to have been uttered before the event, and equally proved to have been fulfilled in the true sense of the prediction, and which goes beyond that power of foresight sometimes possessed by exalted and experienced minds. Remarkable instances of this power are recorded of statesmen and men of affairs here and there in all history; and if it shall finally prove that some biblical predictions transcend any other instances of this forecast, this will seem to imply an exaltation of known human power, rather than any exceptional relation of man to God. It does not appear, therefore, that in the domain of temporal affairs we need ascribe to the Bible what the Bible does not claim for itself, a divine influence different from that by which God governs our daily life.

When we turn to spiritual matters the case is somewhat different; for the Bible is our spiritual book, and is meant to express concisely and with emphasis that which is diffused less perceptibly through daily life.

The first point under this division is the expression of spiritual experience. It is the unanimous verdict of all who have known this book well, through two thousand years, that the human race nowhere possesses such adequate expression of all spiritual states as the Bible offers. Through all changes of theology and church order, despite differences of government, of language, and of race, still psalmist and prophet, beatitudes and parables, have helped the heart to utter its emotions, and brought peace to the sinner and comfort to the suffering. That the spirit of God breathes through such words needs no urging and no proof. They are spirit and they are life. But it is to be noticed that in every instance they were allied in their origin, and they are allied in their effects, with the familiar life of man. They are no closet songs, no floating voices of the air. Heart speaks to heart; and since the spirit of God is thus poured through one heart to another, this is surely inspiration. And yet it does not depart, except by its greatness, from the daily ministrations of Christian brotherhood. One is more tempted, therefore, to pronounce inspiration the universal prerogative of godly souls, than to attribute this power of the Bible to a special gift.

There remains, as the last point, the revelation of theological truth. Of this much the same may be said as of the previous point. Whatever truly noble con-

ceptions of spiritual facts, or privileges, or hopes, prevail among men, have been either wholly derived from, or largely improved by, the Bible. Very much which calls itself the result of philosophical study or of ethical experience is but a graft cut from this tree. But in the Bible these conceptions are not delivered in theological form ; and the gravest errors have arisen from assuming that they were. In every instance the writer's impulse comes from his own or another's experience. These utterances are the outcry of souls profoundly acquainted with God, and wrought upon by the pressure of life till they saw with open vision the meaning of his dealings with the sons of men. But this experience is not confined to the biblical writers. In all ages there are men who live in such constant apprehension of the divine presence, that in extreme moments some truth of God flashes across the mind, self-authenticating and absolute. The ready accord which the people of God gives to these words, once uttered, marks them as divine truth ; and it is this, repeated generation after generation, which has assured to the chief of them their place in the Bible, and certified them as the oracles of God.

Now, this survey seems to show that all the factors of the inspirational act are otherwise known to us. They consist of human powers more or less familiarly

exercised in ordinary life, and of a certain divine impulse communicated to these powers, which is not unknown in our personal experience. That is to say, every element of the complex process of inspiration exists in normal activity among men at all times. So that, if it were the will of God to give us to-morrow new psalms or a new epistle to the churches, of equal validity with the old, we should not be conscious of anything exceptional in the process by which these would be produced; and the new scripture could assume its place with the old ones and share their authority, by no other sanction than the recognition of the people of God, who are for such an office as competent to-day as they were in the earliest Christian centuries. And this brings us back to the only trustworthy sanction of the inspiration and authority of the Bible: that utterance, namely, is for any man inspired which brings him into more conscious harmony with God; and that is inspired for the human race which long and manifold experience among the people of God has shown to have persistently this effect.

We should not pass from this topic without remarking that this view in no degree lessens our reverence for the divine element in the Bible, but rather increases it. The status of the book, as has been before insisted, rests on no theory of its origin, but on its long record of usefulness and power; and if such

a book, instead of being an exceptional production, is a co-ordinate part of that great result which God is working out through all the life of man, then it takes rank among the greatest of his works, and is marvellous in our eyes.

Now, if we ask, in the light of these considerations, how the Bible is to be used, we shall find the way open to satisfactory conclusions. We are to learn from the Bible what we can of that wisdom which God forever suggests through the experience of life. It is mingled with all life in all lands and times ; but we have here what men, specially qualified to perceive it, under specially suggestive circumstances, and with a special impulse for teaching, have learned and recorded. And we are taught by the experience of many ages, that in this study we shall again and again find conscience quickened and enlightened by some word which it will know to be divine ; or sorrow healed by a promise which visibly expresses the love of God. As in all other fields of research, these lessons of the book can only be well understood when confronted, by each scholar, with actual facts analogous to those from which the lessons were drawn. So used, present facts and recorded observations illustrate each other, and the scholar not only comes to grasp the full meaning of the teacher, but may sometimes go beyond the teacher's wisdom.

Of course the beginning of any exhaustive study of this kind, is to know exactly what the pages before us mean to say. It is undoubtedly true of the biblical writers, as of all other thinkers or seers, that their words often suggest to the mind of the reader more than was in the writer's mind. All good thinking or perceiving is an opening of doors. But it is merely dreaming over the page to catch floating suggestions without carefully studying the writer's meaning. A book which has so impressive a history of influence deserves our closest attention ; and any neglect, not to say obstruction, of any study which may throw light upon the meaning of the biblical writers, is clear evidence that the divine claims of the book are not appreciated.

The most mischievous form which this error has taken is the setting up of views which the men of one age have drawn from the study of the Bible, as final and conclusive for those who follow. For this denies a characteristic which gives the Bible one of its strongest claims to be a revelation for all men, namely, its power of progressive instruction. As we have seen, the efficiency of a revelation depends upon the capacity of those who receive to understand it. And as the human mind cannot rest at a fixed point ; but is always, under the tuition of experience, becoming more or differently capable of understanding the meaning of

things, a universal revelation must express fundamental truth in such a way that men at different stages of advance can learn from it all the truth of which they are at each stage capable. Now, the Bible has always been admired for its power of thus meeting every grade of individual life, from the sage to the peasant ; and the fact cannot be ignored that the highest range of human capacity rises through many gradations as the centuries pass, and has an analogous need to find for itself at each stage the meaning of God. To fear or to prove that the Bible cannot endure this test, would be fear or proof that it is not a universal revelation.

But while the most learned of every Christian age have found use for all their learning in the study of the Bible, and while those who undertake the instruction of others have an obligation to let nothing escape them that is attainable, yet the first object of this study for each man is to learn what God has to say to him ; and the key to such learning lies in his own daily life. To this test learned and simple alike must bring all their conclusions for verification. A yoke which neither we nor our fathers could bear is not the yoke of Christ, however it may seem deduced from his words. Doctrines which make difficult the way of daily duty, or sadden more than life itself saddens the heart of the compassionate, are not of that Spirit

whose fruits include joy and peace. And no biblical study, however it may have exhausted the attainments of scholarship, has mastered God's word to men if it does not further in their lives the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

So studied, and with the results of its study so verified, the Bible becomes the greatest, with one exception, of the agencies of Christ. The greatest of all, which we have next to study, is the Holy Spirit.

XIII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit cannot be learned simply by reading the passages in which this phrase occurs. There are allied expressions — the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Christ, or simply the Spirit — which are so often obviously interchangeable as to assure us that they represent the same fundamental conception. At first, however, we seem to find rather a multitude of allied meanings than any one which is constant. But when we have eliminated a class of passages in which the words merely go to form a periphrasis for some more familiar expression, we find three important phases of meaning which run with varying emphasis through the whole Bible. First, the Holy Spirit is a synonym for the name of God. This is far more usual in the Old Testament, but several New Testament passages admit no other meaning. Second, a certain attitude or disposition of man's spiritual nature is meant. This is hardly emphasized in the Old Testament; but in the New the Holy Spirit in this sense becomes a standard and most important expression. Third, the vari-

ous phrases very often mean that divine influence by which God induces in man harmony with Himself. This is hardly more than suggested in the Old Testament, but it is the ruling idea of the New.

Now, a little study will convince us that these are rather shades of meaning than differences. While each text separately may belong more to one than another group, yet a wider survey shows them all blending, so that hardly any passage falls under one definition so markedly as to exclude all trace of the others. This is not confusion of thought, but profusion. For spiritual processes cannot be stated with the precision of mathematics; we can express them only in terms of their phenomena; and as these phenomena are continually varying under changed conditions, an elastic word, while it adapts itself to the phenomenal variations, at the same time holds steadily before the mind the fundamental meaning which underlies all changes of application. This is the use of terms which daily life forces upon men; and this, therefore, is the usage of the book of daily life. We have, then, various shades of meaning susceptible of a threefold grouping, but all underlain by one comprehensive thought; and this fundamental thought is the essential biblical meaning of the Holy Spirit. We must now attempt to get clearly before our minds this basic and all-determining conception; and we shall

find the key to it in what we have already learned of the nature of Christ's work.

We have seen, namely, that the aim of his effort was to bring home to the minds of men the essential spirituality of their life; to demonstrate that the things of the flesh are trivial and weak when compared with the power of the spirit; that our visible living is but a series of transient phenomena through which our souls express themselves and are educated; so that the furthering of this education is the only worthy object of living, and its attainment the only durable possession. Now, this is done by God's perpetual superintendence of our lives. Every experience is a lesson set us, and for every new need of our souls, life brings its appropriate teaching. Nor are we merely subjected to these influences of external things and left to the result; it is most clearly taught that God's presence pervades and dominates all that we undergo, so that he does not so much send worldly experiences to teach us, as himself teach us through them.

But we become aware, in the course of our lives, that the progress of our spiritual education cannot be wholly accounted for by the tangible elements of life. There come at times sudden insight, augmented strength, new groupings of our spiritual acquirements to which the outer conditions do not seem to give rise. And yet these so harmonize with what we have other-

wise learned, so admirably connect the tangible past with the equally tangible future, that we must believe them to be given by the same superintendence which makes our outward life an education of the soul. God is not limited in his influence upon our souls to the mediation of material things ; but to this he adds, as he finds it needful, his immediate touch. Yet he preserves a perfect consistency in the whole process, because, whether mediate or immediate, it is always his contact with the soul which effects our training.

But parallel with this commerce between God and each soul, runs the interaction of souls with each other. Many occurrences indicate a communication of spiritual conditions from man to man by hidden channels. History has instances so widespread as to cover communities, and even nations, in which some epidemic of patriotism, of superstition, of panic, has mysteriously seized the multitude and swept all before it. And on a smaller scale every one's experience has offered similar phenomenon. In their nobler aspects they constitute the silent effect upon a group of persons which flows, we know not how, out of a single noble character, a school, a church, imperceptibly filling the moral atmosphere with purity and zeal. These allusions may suffice to suggest the larger idea of a spiritual affinity among all men, underlying the more familiar experiences of life ; and this comes vividly to sight in the

history of the earliest Gospel propagation, gathering multitudes into one brotherhood, reaching from land to land, constituting the Church almost on the instant a notable phenomenon, and in a few generations making it the greatest organized power in the world. This was always called the work of the Holy Spirit, and it was attributed to the energy of Christ flowing through his followers.

Now, we cannot suppose this communion of godly souls to have been completely in abeyance before Christ came ; but the conditions of a large unity were wanting, and especially there was no central principle or person to form the vitalizing nucleus of such an aggregate. The distinctive characteristic of Christ's work was that he became at once the controlling head of spiritual unity among men. By this is meant nothing mystical, although it is something remote from the apprehension of the senses. It is meant that Jesus Christ, a living spiritual person, began, during his visible life, to exercise, and has exercised ever since, a dominant influence over the hearts of those who trust in him ; that this influence draws like-minded souls as well towards each other as to him ; and that it results in a perpetual and spreading epidemic of enthusiasm and righteousness.

Now, this process is a more advanced stage of that work which we have seen God to be conducting upon

the spirits of all flesh : to whatever degree it has at any time attained, it is the consummation of the divine purpose ; and this touch and intercourse of souls blended in Christ, responding to and co-operating with the work of God upon all souls, fills out the underlying conception of the Holy Spirit. As we contemplate it, there comes into view a vast and elaborate spiritual organism before which the material world and all phenomenal being are as the light dust of the balance. Whatever occurs in the experience of any man is part of that universal life for which and by which all exists. It is God flowing forth to all souls, and all souls reacting under his touch. No personality is extinguished, no arbitrary necessity is imposed ; but the countless multitude of souls made in the image of God are quickened in the germ and fostered through all their growth, that they may at last find their native and chosen satisfaction in the things of God—"that God may be all in all."

As we deal with this conception, we turn now towards its source, and the Holy Spirit is God ; we turn again towards the divine image growing in men, and the Holy Spirit is a disposition of the human soul ; or more often still we survey these alternating currents of divine influence and human aspiration, and the Holy Spirit is the whole of this blessed fellowship in which man and God are one.

The speculations of theology which claim person-

ality for the Holy Spirit, find no support in the Bible fairly understood ; and this view is mischievous because it obscures the whole subject. It is of the first importance to recognize the facts of this great spiritual organism, that we may add our will to its operation ; and we only do this effectively when we become conscious that in this work we are not the recipients merely of divine impulses or help, but ourselves add energy to the force which is saving the world. It is participation of man with God and Christ in this great work which is expressed in the formula of benediction, " In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Without this participation, the scheme of salvation would be a benign fatalism, with man in perpetual childhood, the mere recipient of divine operation. But with this, man becomes fellow-worker with God, under the leadership of Christ, and the entire chain of spiritual operation is complete.

These studies having made us acquainted with the means which Christ employs for his work, we have next to consider the method which he follows in their use.

XIV.

CHRIST'S METHOD.

THE method of Christ is necessarily modelled after the general procedure of God. It is a wise conservatism which develops the future out of the past. "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." Accordingly, it will be found that each of his agencies is the continuation of something which had previously been working to similar ends. God began the education of the race at the first moment. He set in operation at each stage whatever agency was best fitted to further his work at that stage; and Christ came in the fulness of times, in the sense that the work was only then far enough advanced to be ready for his hand. Any conception of a changed purpose on God's part, or of new contingencies not hitherto included in his purpose; any thought of the adoption of means better than those which preceded had been for their time, or that anything was added in Christ which might previously have advantaged the world, would outrage every just conception of the character of God.

The agencies which we have surveyed have always been at work. What Christ added was to enlarge them all to universal sufficiency; to exhibit their per-

fect work upon a human life; and to make known all the fulness of that spiritual being which blends man with God in the Holy Spirit. We are to understand that the whole field of possible human needs is covered by the extension of these agencies which he effects. We are at present as far from having grasped all the efficiency of Christ, and being able to judge what he can accomplish for the welfare of men, as we are from knowing what will be the fortunes or the needs of future generations. Our confidence that all needs will be met rests on the marvellous history of the Christian ages, and on the assurance that the personal leadership of Christ is to continue till "all things shall be subdued unto him." The whole significance of his work is belittled and vitiated when it is imagined that for any reason, whether of limitation or new exultation, Christ's attitude towards men or his power to work their welfare was changed by his death. His apostles had no such idea. They found his help more powerful, and worked more fruitfully by means of it, after he had gone from their sight. Peter said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." Paul insisted that he had been taught by Jesus as truly and as directly as had any other apostle. The entire New Testament is full of the assurance that the death of Jesus had only intensified the conscious relation between him and his disciples. And to this conviction the people of God have

always clung, and the results in their lives have justified the claim. In fact, it has been a conspicuous feature of Christian history that the waning strength of the people of God has again and again been revived by a new personal allegiance and devotion to Christ. And if profound and enduring conviction of spiritual experience, authenticated by constancy of purpose and nobility of life, be sufficient proof of a subjective fact, then the testimony of the ages abundantly proves that Christ the Lord is still accessible in living personality to all who love him.

This does not raise him to Deity. It does not require in him omnipresence or omniscience. God has these attributes, and that suffices. If Christ is the Captain of our salvation, God is still the Sovereign: his God and our God. Nor need we be distressed if we cannot understand all the intricacies of such a relation. The simplest facts of spiritual operations tax our comprehension, and we may well leave to some future stage of loftier intelligence the deep things which lie beyond our grasp. It is enough to dwell in the assurance that through all the centuries the same hand which so skilfully laid out the beginnings of the work, the same heart which so wisely embraced the race of men, have been until now, and will be until the end, directing all the agencies by which men are brought to God.

It is necessary to emphasize this persistency of Christ's work. He said of himself, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" and this necessarily means far more than any mere proclamation,—the offering of a better way, which men may take or leave. Seeking implies solicitude and positive action. And lest too much seem built on a single word, a commentary may be found in his comparison of the shepherd who, having a hundred sheep and losing one, "goeth after that which is lost till he find it." This admits no ambiguity. The method of Christ is one of persistent, unwearied seeking, which will not remit till the lost is found. Nor does so great a conclusion rest on two or three assertions. The New Testament is full of this assiduity, expressed in many ways, and only corroborating what must be inferred from the facts of the case. Since God has a purpose to bring the race of man into harmony with himself, and has sent Christ to effect this purpose, how can the work cease until God's will is done?

XV.

SALVATION FROM SORROW.

THUS far we have studied the work of Christ from the standpoint of God's intent. We come now to view it from the point of man's experience. And the statement that he came to save the lost at once introduces us to the heart of the subject. This word *lost*, which exactly expresses in its primary meaning the facts of the case, has come, through much theological handling, to carry a secondary sense of finality. Of course one could not seriously speak of seeking and saving that which is known to be beyond recovery, and yet the taint of this acquired meaning so clings to the theological use of *lost* that we shall better grasp our subject if we substitute a synonym which has no such secondary implication. Let us understand, then, that Christ came to seek those who were *astray*, as sheep from the fold, or the traveller from his road.

It is noticeable that he began with the assumption that his hearers were out of the right way, and needed his succor. We have no account of any objection to this assumption; and indeed so generally has it been made by those who have taught in his name, and so

generally admitted without protest by their hearers, that we may be sure some fact of universal experience is touched by this assertion. Nor shall we have any difficulty in finding this fact. Most men begin life with high expectations; but as the years go on nearly all discover that they are not realizing what they had confidently looked for. And yet disappointed men seldom acquiesce in their condition; they complain with the tone of those who are defrauded. Now, this implies a certain fixed conception of life, which constitutes at first the expectation of the young, and later the ideal of the disappointed; and through all runs a latent conviction that this ideal is what life ought to be, the proper way or state from which men in their actual experience are astray. Of course it would be impossible for most men to state clearly what they demand of life; and certainly the current ideals are far from the Christian. But the fact that all men have some such conception, which they hope will, or think should, replace the imperfect present, puts all in position to give willing attention to the preacher of better things, and predisposes them to accept from him not merely treatment, but a new diagnosis of their disease.

When men come to seek a cause for this failure, it is found to lie either in the conditions which surround them, or in their own voluntary conduct, or perhaps

more often in both combined. It is hardly to be expected that the proportions of these causes will be justly assigned even by the most sincere, but the distinction is true and is essential. It plainly points out the two difficulties which beset the life of man, the two senses in which men are astray; and it thus prepares us for the double aspect of Christ's saving work. Those encroachments of external conditions which defeat the ideal of life are the causes of sorrow; and those faults of will which bring an analogous result are sin. Now, Christ saves from sorrow and from sin; and while the two are often blended, each lending support to the other, yet to the candid mind they are so far distinct that they may best be discussed separately, due regard being always had to their more obvious connections.

Directly in the way of these studies, however, stands a difficulty which must first be considered, — the so-called Mystery of Evil. Ever since men began to think of their state, they have proposed as a sore and difficult problem the question, "Why is the life of man beset with evil?" And notwithstanding all the thinking of the ages, this remains to-day the most agitated of questions. Now, if this were merely a theoretical problem, it would suffice to say that the questioner really asks why human life is different from his wishes, and to answer that it is so because his wishes differ from

God's, and God prevails. This is perfectly logical and fair. The objector cannot show that he is competent to conduct the world, nor that his ideal is the best, and he therefore has no right to judge an order of things which, after all, produces much success, by his untried notion of what might be better. This is the way in which the biblical writers meet the question, so far as they can be said to touch it at all; and perhaps the highest practical wisdom of our time takes this attitude. But the problem is not merely one of the study; it is the cry of burdened souls struggling with adversity, and tempted in their struggles to doubt the goodness or the existence of Him who is their only refuge. In a work like the present, therefore, the discussion cannot be waived.

The subject has suffered much from confused thinking, rhetorical exaggeration, and false sentiment. And most of the mystery which is attributed to evil will be found eliminated when these sources of perplexity are removed.

The word *evil* is ambiguous. It may mean either hardship or wickedness. The discussion, therefore, is twofold, and each division is found to lose much of its obscurity by separation from the other. We have already discussed the mystery of sin; and that large proportion of suffering which is obviously the result of

the sufferer's own sin, offers no mystery beyond that of its cause. The present question is, "Why is the life of man subject to undeserved hardship?"

We must begin by asking to what extent the implied assertion is true. Those who look with honest eyes, and are not confronted with exceptional conditions, find life preponderantly wholesome and cheerful. Of the hundred persons whom one may encounter in an ordinary day, hardly two or three are seen actually suffering; and even those whose lot is exceptionally hard spend but a small part of each day in positive distress. It is customary to forget the alleviations of habit and interruption; but in sober fact the staple of life consists of the placid and uneventful performance of function, which rises to delight far oftener than it sinks to pain. Life is subject to hardship, but does not consist of it.

A further very large abatement must be made by excluding imaginary evils. For instance, it is customary to speak of the hard lot of man under evolution. Races and families die out in the struggle for existence, the strongest surviving. But the individuals of all races and families die. The only peculiarity of dying races is sterility, so that the race or family is not recruited; and surely it is no reasonable cause of complaint that the weak cease to produce weaklings. Similar reflections apply to the alleged sufferings of

privation. A highly sensitive and cultivated mind grieves that its neighbors have few thoughts above daily tasks and comfortable homes, or that their standard of comfort is so far below its own. But when it is found that these objects of pity are quite unconscious of any hardship, and that among them the fundamental virtues — honesty, self-control, devotion to duty, family affection — are fully as prevalent as among the cultivated, one may easily conclude that such pity is misplaced, and such accusations need no serious answer.

The matter of physical pain, too, is greatly misunderstood. Nothing is better established than the physiological necessity of pain. As a warning, a help to diagnosis, a beneficent and instructive punishment, pain is indispensable for the continuance of animal life; nor is it possible to conceive any different sensation that could take its place. The unpleasant and imperative quality of pain is exactly what makes it effectual. Nor must we admit exaggerated ideas of a needless excess of pain. All the less cultivated races astonish us by their indifference to wounds, and brute creatures receive hurts with almost the same readiness as they give them. "Nature red in tooth and claw" seems little conscious that she should be pitied. The argument, too, formerly turned much on the hardship of labor and fatigue. But experience has shown that

work is the best school of manhood, and that the fatigue and trial which accompany it are more stimulant than hurtful.

All these deductions being made, the fact remains that men are subject, in very unequal allotments, to undeserved physical suffering and spiritual anguish; and it is a legitimate and urgent question why these things have a place in the plans of a beneficent God. To one who makes the inquiry for the first time under the stress of present suffering, any answer must be unsatisfactory. Pain obscures the mind and eclipses everything. And probably the alleged mystery has grown largely out of futile attempts to understand suffering at such times. But to the mind at liberty to attend, two very sufficient reasons can be given. For there are two results of the very highest importance in the education of man which are found by experience to grow out of suffering, and are not known to be attainable by any other means. In the first place, there is a group of virtues of which part are developed by the endurance of suffering, and the rest by ministering to it; and neither could these be spared from human character, nor do they develop among those who are wholly at ease. And secondly, there is no part of human life which so perfectly educates the sense of brotherhood as those experiences which suffering and need produce. When all the abatements

already suggested have been made, a candid mind will not count the price too great for such inestimable results.

Of course the salvation of Christ does not aim to abolish this beneficent process. It seeks to minimize the pain which must be borne, to increase the strength which bears it, and especially to produce that oneness with God which is the object alike of the suffering and the salvation.

Nothing has so endeared Jesus to the hearts of his disciples as that he too was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Those on whom the hardship of life has most heavily pressed, often of low or uncultivated intelligence, have perceived that this august sufferer was somehow of high station and commanding power, which he used not to sweeten his own lot, but to relieve the woes of others; and the unformulated consciousness of his greatness, of his compassion, and of his sorrows, has at once ennobled and assuaged their own distress. And in this his followers may closely imitate their Lord; for the administration of such relief is among the greatest of the tasks to which Christ inspires the Church, and of this the Church has never quite lost sight. It is true that her official prescriptions and the studies of her theologians have dealt far more with the intellect and with personal

conduct; but the real people of God have always clung to the comfort of Christian brotherhood, and no formalism or degradation has ever quite extinguished Christian charity.

But there is far more than this. Since sorrow grows out of undesired relations with our surroundings, the readiest suggestion of relief lies in a readjustment, and this forms a prominent part of Christ's work. All true progress and reform are of this work, and tend directly to diminish sorrow. The Christian spirit constantly impels men to new labors in this field. And when difficulties accumulate and others grow discouraged, it is among Christians that every better tendency finds sure anchorage; and hence it takes new impulse when the storm is past. But Christ speaks also to the intellect of the sorrowing. We have seen that his great revelation was the full meaning of divine fatherhood. To the conception of a father's guiding wisdom and administrative power he added paternal solicitude and patience, presenting to the mind of man love perfect in strength. And to this control he taught us that all the life of man is subject. We who suffer, and the conditions which cause our sorrow, are all alike held in the firm hand of the Father, and he administers all with the single purpose of bringing us into harmony with himself. Just in proportion as the mind of any man is enlarged, will this view of his life

abate his inevitable sorrows and help him to bear what cannot be removed.

But besides the sentiment and the intellect, the will of man is much concerned with his sorrows. For it is plain to any enlightened judgment, the Stoic as well as the Christian, that very much of our suffering is the direct result of kicking against the pricks. Since God ordains to a definite end the course of things amid which we live, it is plain that if we are to find these things to our mind, our mind must be like his. The proportion of human sorrow which can be traced to disappointed ideals, to the obstinacy of wrong desire grown into habit, to voluntary struggle against recognized law, is far greater than any will believe who has not made the computation. Now, just so far as the will of God becomes our will, so far do all these sources of sorrow cease. Christian history is brilliant with examples of self-surrender which has filled the hearts of disciples with joy and peace under circumstances that seemed to others intolerable; nay, has found in these very circumstances cause for thanking God that they were counted worthy to suffer.

Now, although we can give account in rational terms of all these processes by which Christ saves from sorrow, yet the experience of Christians transcends any enumeration of details. These are not rehearsed in the daily thoughts of the saved; they are all compre-

hended, and except for special occasions are swallowed up, in the consciousness of divine and human sympathy; that is, in the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to bear always in mind that while for purposes of intellectual enlightenment we necessarily dissect such experience, and examine all its elements, yet as it enters into the life of man, the process of salvation from sorrow is neither complex nor mysterious. In him who is thus astray there is a sense of inward struggle and of surroundings with which he does not harmonize, and this is sorrow. But over him who has been found and brought back there comes an all-pervading sense of peace and content. He does not analyze nor explore; he simply lives surrounded by infinite love and inviolable safety, and warm with affection towards all mankind. Events adjust themselves; duties are delights; life flows on as God wills: "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

There is one burden of sorrow, however, which seems to most men so large an element in the unmerited bitterness of life, that the subject cannot be passed without special consideration. This is death.

The radical change which Christ made in the view of death has been sufficiently explained, and should completely dispose of that dread with which one may contemplate his own death. But there remains the

heavy burden of sorrow which the death of others imposes.

Grief for the death of others may be resolved into the sense of loss and anxiety for the future. And this sense of loss turns sometimes on the surrender of earthly advantages, and at other times on the separation of friends. Defeated hopes, interrupted labors, the end of life's delight, are all answered by that trust in God which is the first of Christ's teachings. If we are sure that no sparrow falls without him, we may confidently believe that no human life is terminated without some wise design, and may leave to God's care what seems so foreign to our ways. And, indeed, in the particular of interrupted labors, which sometimes seem so grievous a part of the calamity of death, experience shows that we greatly overestimate the importance of any man's work. Others appear who can continue, and often can better what was left undone; and the persistency with which the work of the world goes on while men come and go, is one of the most obvious proofs of divine control.

It is very different with the separation of friends. Light attachments, it is true, are outlived and replaced, so that what appeared the most violent grief proves but a sort of emotional hysteria. But there are not a few unions of friends which grow so deeply into the heart, that when they are sundered no lapse of

time and no new affection can obliterate the sense of loss. A part of the soul seems reft away. At the moment of such bereavement it is futile for another to suggest, it is almost useless for the sufferer to recall, any form of consolation which addresses the reason. The only solace then is the consciousness of other friendships which yet remain. Human friends, while they cannot replace the loss, can ease the pain; but the long-established repose of the soul upon the love of God goes far to rob even this grief of its sting.

When, however, the shock is past, and the mind can think again, it is found that this sorrow looks much towards the future, and blends with that other element which has been named. So that it is by removing the anxiety for the future which death begets, that Christ becomes most effectually the comforter of those who mourn. We have considered one side of this forward look, and still another will more fitly fall under the head of salvation from sin; but just here we are concerned with the question which so burdens the hearts of mourners, — whether friends parted by death will meet again. The Bible does not explicitly answer this question, although several of its writers betray an expectation that it will be so. But the view of life as a continuing development, which we have found to be Christ's teaching, seems to illuminate this subject.

If the soul continues its life beyond death with full

identity, memory and affection must remain ; and if the object of continued as of present life is the development of the soul, those experiences treasured in memory, and those affections seated in the heart, which have already contributed to the ennobling of the soul, must continue to exercise their influence. But in the earthly life hardly anything contributes more powerfully to our development than continued intercourse with persons whom we nobly love. And therefore, since mutual intercourse may be as beneficial to these as to us, it seems inevitable to conclude that the divine solicitude will assure to us so important a means of spiritual growth. The conclusion, therefore, is that in the life beyond death those friends will be again united whose intercourse truly furthers their spiritual advancement. Nor can we be mistaken in believing that the infinite Father's affection will not deny to his children this supreme desire of bereft and loving hearts. Since love is to draw all souls at last to him, the love of soul for soul must surely be strong enough to bring together, though it were from the ends of the universe, those who yearn unceasingly for each other.

XVI.

SALVATION FROM SIN.

WE come now to the final topic for which all our previous studies have been preparatory, — salvation from sin. We have learned that sin is the opposition of man's will to God's, and is, therefore, unlike any other element in God's relations to his works; for in all that is known to us of the universe, there is nowhere else any sign of opposition, or the capacity for opposition, by any created thing to the law of its being. Sin alone, therefore, disturbs the harmony of the universe; and we need not be surprised to find all the agencies by which God sustains and rules the world bent towards the cure of this blemish. At whatever point God's ordering of the world touches man, we shall always find that this order makes for righteousness.

And, further, we have found that sin is no unexpected intruder into the spiritual realm, but necessarily grows out of our nature as free agents. For since God will have from men hearty accord with the divine will, and not servile acquiescence, and since man can freely adopt God's will for his own in no other way than through profound conviction that nothing else so

well suits the requirements of his own nature, it follows that man must first try other ways than the divine, that he may have sure grounds for this conviction. Therefore, God will not merely lead us through his world to show us how well he has planned and constructed it. This, if this were all, must have won the approval of any intelligence; but God will have far more than this. He will have us know his work to the core; he puts it into our hands, to do with it what we will and can; he will have us test it, try to better it, substitute other ways for his ways, learn through and through, negatively and positively, what are the works and what the will of God. No slight experience will suffice, nor any mere aggregate of individual tests. Men must try singly and in groups; communities and various civilizations, with all their intricacies, must struggle with the order of things; one generation must hand down to another its incomplete experiments, till no combinations of human wisdom or human strength have left untried the effort to find higher satisfactions than God offers.

And, simply guaranteeing that we cannot go so far as to ruin either his world or ourselves, he waits for us to be satisfied. He waits with endless patience and tenderness, and with the calm certainty that, when we have tried all and learned all, we shall reject all else and choose only his way.

Of course God did not produce his human children without full foresight of these things; and we must, therefore, avoid any thought of sin as interrupting the divine plan, or in the least degree constituting a feature of the world not included in the original scheme of creation. And equally of course, we must expect to find that the means by which Christ is removing sin are not special agencies apart from the general order of life; but that they consist in his adaptation of the familiar things of the world to this great work, accomplishing thereby, amid the dullest routine of life, the original purpose with which God made the world. The New Testament is full of the idea that Christ takes up and completes a work long since begun; that he is therefore a member — though the greatest member — of a long series of world-agencies, carrying on from step to step the eternal purpose.

This conception forbids the idea that his contribution to man's salvation consists of a single act, however momentous, or the acts of a single epoch. The entire history of Christianity, from the pages of the New Testament to our day, shows that the impulse given by Jesus in Judea has been sustained by continual contact of his spirit with the souls of men through all the ages. We have already considered this perpetual headship of Christ through the Holy Spirit, and it will therefore be understood that, even when his name

is not mentioned, the work of salvation now to be discussed is Christ's work, because he animates and guides every agency and every agent.

The fundamental provision for the removal of sin lies in the fact that, as we have already seen, man is so constituted in the likeness of God, that to whatever degree he apprehends the things which concern him as God apprehends them, to that degree he will desire regarding them what God desires. Salvation, therefore, is largely a process of enlightenment, including in this term not only the illumination of the intellect, but the right development of the sentiments, since the things of God can be apprehended only by the action of head and heart duly harmonized. But enlightenment is not all; for we have found a third factor which impedes the free action of conscience and will, —the force of habit. This might be resolved into a motive of the will, since the habitual way is the line of least resistance, and a sluggish will may see promise of more satisfaction in declining to resist than in any inducement to effort. But without dwelling on this analysis, the fact is important that repeated yielding to sin establishes a habit of sinning which reduces the voice of conscience to a protest, and the action of the will to mere acquiescence, and in this way enfeebles and degrades the whole man. To a sinner so

weakened, all the inducements to virtue seem addressed in vain ; and his first need is some discipline which shall break the yoke of habit and reinvigorate the moral nature.

These considerations show us that salvation from sin must consist, so far as it can be reduced to systematic statement, of enlightenment and strengthening. To these must be added persuasion, of which we shall have to take ample account, but which almost refuses to be classified as a part, since it seems rather the informing spirit of the whole work. Now, Christ provides all these, but not in any rigid method of routine. For so different are the characters and experiences of men, that some learn first what is the last lesson of others, and no sequence of development can be suggested which will fit the actual experience of any large group of men. This, however, does not forbid us to adopt an order of study, provided we always remember that the order belongs to logical thought, and not to daily life. And in this way we shall take up, one by one, the really inseparable elements of that process by which Christ saves from sin.

But in order to appreciate the greatness of the resources which are provided for this work, and the necessary slowness of its progress, we must consider more fully the obstacles which lie in the way. For sin

is really an absurdity; and if experience did not sadly prove the contrary, we should suppose a few demonstrations and a little advice all that might be needed. It will be well, therefore, to correct this fancy by examining some of the difficulties which beset the overthrow of sin.

The first of these relates to enlightenment. Men must be brought to apprehend the things which concern them as God apprehends. These things are the physical world, including our own bodies, other men, and God. Now, we are born without any knowledge of these, and with only rudimentary faculties for knowing them, and we have at the same time to develop the faculties, and by means of them acquire the knowledge. Of course immature faculties cannot grasp the magnitude of the entire task; and, imagining that it is nearly accomplished, they draw far-reaching conclusions from very scanty experience. This is done, too, at the most receptive period of life; and the conclusions become imbedded in the growing mind, to bias alike the development and the knowledge which the future brings. When it is added that the will is in free exercise during this process, and has much control over the course of daily experience, it will be easily understood why most men, before they set themselves to consider the things of God, have already views of life and its satisfactions to which they cling tena-

ciously, and in which error is largely and intricately mixed. Now, to whatever extent these views differ from God's views, salvation must modify or eradicate them. It is probably well for those who attempt to co-operate in the work of Christ, that we are so little able to appreciate the magnitude of this difficulty.

Another obstacle lies in the enfeebling power of sinful habit. So heavy is this yoke, that it has seemed to the majority of Christian thinkers to imply an innate aptitude for sin, as if sin were the established destiny of man. The facts of experience do not support this theory. It is a fancy of the closet, and is practically ignored by those who, laboring for reform, have become acquainted at close quarters with the worst of sinners. But however erroneous the explanation, it remains as a fact universally observed, that habitual sin taints the whole man, paralyzes the will, which should throw it off, and seems to become an essential part of his being. There is still another difficulty not easily explained, but which the familiar experience of life knows in this as well as many other connections, — obstinacy. The will often chooses to disregard conscience for no recognizable reason beyond the pleasure of self-assertion. The strength of this obstinacy and the unreasonable occasions of its exercise constitute both a difficulty and a puzzle in the way of moral reform, and can be by no means left out of our account.

Now, no one can rightly estimate or successfully study the saving work of Christ who does not appreciate the greatness of the task as shown by these obstacles. And yet the work itself does not wait for deep study nor for philosophical analysis. We must always remember that such investigations as these are not preliminary to the facts, nor to our participation in the facts. God is saving the world through Christ; and thousands who do not well understand his processes are helping them forward. The Holy Spirit in men's hearts enables them efficiently to respond to the divine process both in forsaking their own sins and in bringing others to righteousness, even though they have not thought to ask how such things can be done.

Returning now to our inquiries, we have first to study Christ's methods of making men "wise unto salvation;" that is, of enlightenment. In its most general aspect this coincides with the whole breadth of Christian civilization; and this phrase has far more meaning than is generally understood. No man can have any contact with social or domestic affairs, with politics, business, or law, without coming under some touch of the Gospel as it is diffused through the whole life of the community by the force of Christian institutions.

It is not contended that this enlightenment abolishes sin, or can at any point of attainment suffice to

save men. But it prepares the way of Christ with great power. It secures place and opportunity for his church; it diffuses the Bible; it brings into perpetual contact those who do and those who do not follow him. It also prepares the way for the consciousness of sin by bringing men to consider their actions as personal and voluntary, not customary and of course. It begins the subjection of the animal to the spiritual nature, and opens avenues of divine access not possible without it.

Another general means of enlightenment is the instruction imparted by personal contact. It is hardly possible to overestimate this power of personal influence, and it is not generally remembered how widely it is exercised. In public and in private, by priest and by preacher, by parents and friends, the principles of the Gospel, illustrated by Christian lives and vivified by personal enthusiasm, are unceasingly pressed upon the attention of Christendom. His lot must be indeed peculiar who does not at some time come under this influence. And all these agents draw their inspiration from the Church, which in turn derives it from the life of Christ, externally through the Bible history, and internally through the Christian consciousness. Thus the stream of personal influence originating with the Saviour, and re-enforced by the personality of his servants, finds in the Christian civilization its possi-

bility of free exercise, and encompasses the lives of men.

All this is the environment. We have now to study the work of enlightenment within the hearts of men. Each man's circumstances, as we have seen, are arranged by God for the development of his character; and we have studied the process by which experience demonstrates the futility of sin. When this process has profoundly impressed this conviction upon the mind, it constitutes the beginning of conversion; that is, the turning of the soul from sin to virtue. We shall have to make very careful study of this operation, and the point which we have now reached naturally introduces it by a consideration of punishment. *

The successive conceptions of divine punishment which have prevailed in Christian theology, illustrate the fact that the dogma which expresses for any age its understanding of the truth, is mainly determined by the tone of contemporary life. In ignorant and barbarous times the imagination has labored to fill the subject with horrors; while the increasing substitution of more humane views in our day reflects far less the power of argument than the influence of a higher civilization. And yet some apprehension of the true basis of this doctrine has never wholly perished. Dante makes the inscription over the gates of hell recite that the place was founded by eternal wisdom

and love. Endless ingenuity has been spent in trying to reconcile this with the awful scenes which follow; but the effort is in vain. The paradox simply shows that while in a moment of abstraction the poet may utter an echo of the primal truth, yet when the imagination is set in play its pictures are determined by his environment. Our studies will enable us easily to grasp this primal truth.

Punishment is the painful consequence which sin, under the existing order of the universe, necessarily entails upon the sinner. It cannot be thought of in the commercial way, — so much punishment for so much sin, — because sins are too subtle and complicated for the mind to make any comparative estimate of them; and therefore, even if we conceive the divine wisdom to apportion an exact degree of punishment to every shade of guilt, still, since we are unable to appreciate such nicety, it could have no effect on us. But in fact the divine Judge does not sentence us for our covert acts, nor yet for separate sinful volitions. It is guiltiness, and not specific instances of guilt, to which he addresses his punishments. God is not aiming to “get even” with the sinner. No balanced account of exactly awarded penalties would satisfy him if at the end the sinner remained sinful still. His entire aim is to make to the sinner, as to a rea-

sonable being, a certain demonstration of the nature of sin; and whatever degree of chastisement is needed to effect this, is the due measure. But there is another quality of punishment well known to have far greater moral efficacy than degrees of severity, and that is certainty. All human experience goes to prove this, although it is the element most lacking in criminal procedure among men. In the divine administration, however, inviolable certainty of punishment is the characteristic most emphasized. We shall have much to learn of divine forgiveness; but divine pardon, as the word applies to human governments, is inconceivable. And the reason lies in the nature of sin, and consequently of its results.

We have found that sin is the determination of the will to follow a way other than God's, and that the inducement to this is the hope of greater satisfaction. But as man and the universe are adjusted, it is impossible that any way should yield to the mature soul so much satisfaction as the way of God. Now, in order that man may certainly learn this from the experiments of his immaturity, — that is, from his sins, — the result of every trial must be inexorable. Unless he will alter the constitution of his universe, God cannot separate the result from the sin, and man can escape punishment only by avoiding sin. The punishment may be physical or spiritual, immediate or delayed, in

this world or another, but because it has a work to do upon man for which no other provision is made or is conceivable, all the energy of the divine love is pledged to its inexorable administration; and hell, rightly understood, does rest on love and wisdom.

Out of the same consideration grows the necessary limit of punishment. The only imaginable reason why the good God should inflict suffering upon his creatures, is that it is the certain means of their highest good. Therefore, the responsibility which God assumes in undertaking the moral education of his children, pledges him on the one hand to produce this result in every case to which he applies chastisement, "whereof all are partakers;" and on the other hand to push this dreadful agency no farther than the result requires.

But punishment carried to its full effect can do no more than convince the mind that sin is ill-advised, and so produce submission. Another agency must co-operate to bring the will into harmony with God. This is found in the constant beneficence of the divine order, concurrent with the sinner's other experience. No earthly lot is without evidence of this. There can be no sorrow so deep but some soul has found cause to praise God in equal depths. And the ordinary life of man is so full of daily blessings (though we take them as things of course), that when

the mind, defeated in its experiments of evil and humbled into self-distrust, casts about for some other guide, it needs only to be shown these evidences of the divine presence and love to recognize and acknowledge their lesson. And then some touch of the Holy Spirit, through channels human or divine, begins the gracious change towards virtue.

An objection to this view of the results of human experience may be based upon the fact that the events and punishments of a lifetime are often not seen to have produced any good effect upon evil men, and they die in their sins. In answer to this it becomes necessary to elaborate a point already touched upon. We found in the resurrection of Christ assurance that the soul at death departs with all its faculties unimpaired, and with full remembrance of its earthly experience. Now, with Christ's revelation of continuous life, in which death is only an incident, and remembering that the whole purpose of our being is to grow towards the divine likeness (which no man has attained at the hour of death), we may conclude that this growth must continue after death as before, until it finds consummation in some future, however remote. And to this the memories of earthly life must contribute, co-operating with the unknown new conditions which will then surround the soul.

For we find in our present state that the fruits of

experience often ripen long after the experience is past. Indeed, it seldom happens that a man grasps the full meaning or instruction of the passing day; but memory and reflection, with perhaps the help of some further happenings, mature at length a full understanding of the past. Now, no reason can be conceived why this may not freely occur after disembodiment. It may well be that the new conditions will powerfully promote that study by each man of his own life in the flesh, which will open to him all the meaning in it which he had not seen before. And in this way we may surmise a use for those numberless experiences, sometimes entire lives, which seem utterly fruitless and wasted. Useless as they seem to us, they are impressing upon the dull soul a wide range of fearful knowledge, which the power of the divine touch can transmute into heavenly wisdom and sympathy.

This process is not wholly conjectural. It is sometimes seen here when the desperately wicked turn to God and become most efficient agents in saving the lost. And to make easily acceptable the suggestion that this must be the normal destiny of every sinful soul in the life beyond death, we need only the assurance that the divine hand never forsakes the depraved, but directs all their earthly experience, amid whatever depths of wickedness, to this appointed end. But when these experiences begin their work upon the

awakened soul, we may well believe that their results will not be wrought without pain and anguish, so that the doctrine of punishments after death, which has been so tenaciously held by the Church, seems fully warranted by this view. Only it must always be remembered that no suffering can befall men here or hereafter without God's will, and that the divine Fatherhood can inflict no pain which has not for its aim and its assured result the infallible purpose of God, — that we may become partakers of his holiness.

Now, out of these two elements combined — namely, punishment and the perception of God's goodness — grows the consciousness of sin. It is not the mere humiliation of defeat; but when with this is coupled the recognition that all his struggles have been against patient love, then for the first time the sinner knows his sin. But at this point a new difficulty appears; namely, the psychological fact that sin perverts the judgment and produces a certain delusion of which the consequences have been vast beyond measure. The conscious sinner, humiliated and aware of God, is convinced that he has forfeited the divine favor, and can regain it, if at all, only by some act of propitiation. This belief has been common to all men under all forms of religion. Priestcraft has thriven on the pretence of placating God or the gods, and there has been

no limit to the penances which men have gladly endured with the hope of regaining the divine favor. The memory of past sins seems to them an accumulation of indebtedness from which they have no power to escape, which they are persuaded God has a right and is disposed to exact with rigor, and for which in their despair they seek somehow to win his pardon.

Now, from the first, Christians have understood that Christ came to release sinners from this despair, and countless multitudes have looked to him with this assurance, and come out of darkness into great light and peace. It has mattered little to the sufferers by what process this might be conceived to be done. They have accepted any offered explanation of the happy fact. But the thinkers of the Church have entangled themselves in a web of impossibilities as dishonorable to God as it was discreditable to themselves. And all the difficulty has grown out of the mistake of fancying that the sinner, bewildered in his sin, is competent to tell us of spiritual things, and that therefore his assurance that he has forfeited the divine favor and needs to propitiate God, is true.

But Christ came to tell the world that the despairing sinner is deluded; that nothing man can do ever changes God's desire towards him, — no depth of depravity, no mountain of guilt, no life-long hardness of

heart can for a moment raise any barrier between him and God, except the existing sinfulness of his own heart; and at whatever moment this ceases to exist, he will know the fulness of divine love. *There are no arrears of sin.* There is an awful bondage grown out of the awful past, and much and long must the soul labor to overthrow habit and attain Christian maturity; but at every point the gracious Father beckons and helps and waits; nor can the saved soul look back to any moment at which God was estranged or angry. To men painfully striving to win God's forgiveness, Christ announces that forgiveness is the normal and unalterable attitude of God. It must not be overlooked that forgiveness is made conditional in the Bible, and the condition, however worded, requires abandonment of sin and a tender heart. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." But we need not stumble at the language, and we must insist upon the fact. The language is simply that of daily life, which Jesus customarily used. His help to men did not depend on words; he taught through the facts of life. He has no formal discourse on forgiveness, but the parable of the prodigal expresses, both more plainly and more profoundly than any formula, the waiting readiness of God. Now, the prodigal knew himself forgiven only when he went to his father; and so the very simple meaning of these

conditions is that hard hearts are incapable of receiving God's forgiveness, though he waits to bestow it.

The death of Jesus on the cross has always been felt, with whatever clearness or obscurity of thought, to be the culminating point of that process by which he helps fearful sinners towards God, — the atonement. This is repeated and emphasized in the New Testament. He died, "the righteous for the unrighteous." Sinners are washed clean in his blood. The cross is the symbol of salvation. Now, much of this, and the strongest of it, is imagery addressed to Jews, and borrowed from the sacrifices of the ancient ritual. But when all allowance is made for this, it still remains conspicuous that the cross of Christ is in the thought of the apostles the focus of his saving work. Nor need we look beyond the New Testament to find the explanation. This death was the seal and crown of all his life; so that whatever he had done or taught is here expressed with immeasurable emphasis. As an example of the highest living he here consummates all in an act which combines the sublimest faith with the humblest obedience. And as God's Word, his perfect revelation and expression, he here exemplifies the love of God beyond all the power of speech or doctrine. Upon this the apostles dwell and enlarge, their strains being all summed up in the unanswerable question of

Paul : " He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? "

The method, then, by which Christ meets this universal delusion of the sinner, is by emphasizing the love of God, demonstrating and urging it through all his life, and at last most of all upon the cross. And all experience has proved the efficacy of this atonement, this bringing of men to God. Through all the centuries, whatever the intricacies of theological explanation, the simple faith of the people of God has clung to the Crucified, has looked on him and dared to hope. And in our own day, they who go among the lost to bring them back, find no means so powerful as the story of the cross, exemplified and interpreted by their own unselfish lives.

We have now studied Christ's process of enlightenment, which is found to be much more than informing the intellect ; for it includes that quickening of sentiment by which the divine goodness is apprehended. The sinner upon whom this has been wrought is now delivered from his two delusions ; namely, that sin can satisfy man, and that it can forfeit the favor of God. And this brings him to the point indicated in the career of the prodigal "when he came to himself." A man in this condition, taking account of his own state,

may find within himself a true knowledge of sin, coupled with an abhorrence of it. At the same time he realizes that the course of events will continue to offer temptations which he is fearfully conscious he can hardly resist. But he also knows that God surrounds him with his goodness, calls him to his service, and urges upon his acceptance, under the administration of Christ, all needed help. The inevitable result of all this sincerely experienced is again portrayed in the story of the prodigal: the sinner says, "I will arise and go to my Father." This is repentance, and it includes all the elements which have been named, — abhorrence of sin, consciousness of danger, trust in divine help, and determination to struggle towards righteousness.

This completes the process of conversion. The conscience, the intellect, and to some extent the will, are turned from evil towards virtue. And yet experience shows that the soul at this stage is far from being securely won to God. A further work, both long and difficult, is to be accomplished. No soul once in the bondage of sin has been known so completely to escape from it that some force of temptation, some hour of weakness, might not again seduce it. For the practical purposes of life it is enough to recognize this warning fact, to keep up the struggle, and at each crisis to seek anew the divine help. But a study like

ours would be incomplete if we did not endeavor to understand the cause of this discouraging fact, and the nature of the help which Christ applies to it. We must exclude those backslidings in which conscience is not at first clear and it is only after the new sin that the sinner recognizes its character. This merely indicates a defect of enlightenment, and does not fall under the head we have now to consider. The mysterious fact before us is that when reason has denounced and conscience protested, the will yet decides to seek the satisfaction which temptation offers.

Now, to a certain extent this must always remain a mystery, for it involves a mental act which seems inscrutable. It is fundamental, and probably can never be resolved into any simpler ideas. Let us examine this. When after full enlightenment we hesitate before temptation, we are conscious that the will is balancing. It is not the deliberation of reason, it is not any appeal of sentiment, nor even an uncertainty of conscience; it is the poisoning of the will before its definite determination: and these two acts constitute the unique peculiarity of the will by which it originates a new departure, and which is comparable with nothing but the creative act of God. But while we may not fathom this ultimate fact, we know much about it. Since the will, equally with intellect and sentiment, is under the primary law of our being, that

no way can in the end satisfy it but God's way, it follows that such a reversion to sin indicates immaturity of the will. So that the difficulty is, that while reason and sentiment are profoundly won to God, are satisfied with their experience of sin, and have decided for virtue, the will, still immature, does not certainly act with them.

The remaining measures of salvation, therefore, must be addressed to the further development of the will. But since the will is an inseparable faculty of the man, and can reach its maturity only through harmony with reason and sentiment, it is easily seen that these, which in the case before us are more highly developed, must be the means of educating the will also. And this task — assuming the continuance of those enlightening means which we have studied — is twofold: First, the force of habit by which the will decides off-hand for sin must be broken by prolonged exercise in forming determinations for virtue; and second, the will must be persuaded. In both these tasks reason and sentiment co-operate; but the task of persuading the will, by far the more momentous of the two, is mostly that of sentiment. Great as this is, and difficult as its ultimate processes are to understand, yet as a matter of experience it is simple and familiar. No fact of daily life is surer than that sentiment can persuade the stubborn will. Honor, patriotism, pa-

rental affection, personal love, are seen every day to be stronger motives than greed or love of life or unreasoning obstinacy itself. And it is through this constraint of his love that Christ most effectually wins the soul, wins those, indeed, whom nothing else can turn. Through all the processes which have seemed in our cold analysis half mechanical, runs this indescribable power of the Holy Spirit, giving them force no words can measure. And sometimes with no process that can be named, by its own tender efficacy, the love of Christ constrains us. It may come through the story of his life or his death, quickened by the imagination into present reality; it may be interpreted and made tangible through a human heart which he has kindled; or out of all life's course, with no definition of time or place, there may steal upon the hard or careless soul a sense of brooding goodness, a consciousness of the everlasting arms, an inarticulate appeal as of deep calling unto deep, "Son, give me thy heart." Before these persuasions of the Holy Spirit, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life and the obstinacy of the stubborn will all melt away, and another soul is Christ's.

XVII.

SANCTIFICATION.

THAT turning of the soul from sin to virtue which we have been considering under the name of conversion, is only a beginning. The perfect work of the Gospel upon men consists in the formation of settled and permanent character, and is necessarily a slow and continued process. The work of conversion is more dramatic, and admits more precise statement of details; but it is worthless except as the beginning of patient character-building, which is the ultimate aim of all God's dealing with men, and therefore the true function of the Gospel. No better name for this process can be found than that familiar in theology, — Sanctification; and we have now to study the agencies by which this is effected.

These agencies are largely associated with the Church; some of them, indeed, being hardly possible without such an organization. But it must be insisted upon that Christ is limited to no such bounds; for the history of the Christian ages repeatedly shows the Church misled into repudiation or persecution of those who were far nearer the Gospel standard than herself.

We may group the means of sanctification under three heads, — work, association with the spiritually minded, and intercourse with God.

Christian work includes not only what is done for the maintenance and extension of religious institutions, but all effort which grows out of the principles of the Gospel, and seeks unselfishly to further the welfare of men. Such work bears double fruit. The primary result is upon those to whom it is directed, and we have had occasion to dwell on this. But, secondarily, the work reacts upon the worker so greatly to his advantage in his struggle against sin, that every wise Christian carefully provides himself a place which will hold him to its exercise. The essential benefit is that by the necessities of the work the will is trained to the habit of right decisions. Especially the habit is formed of holding to a settled purpose as against passing impulse. The conduct of work, too, requires the co-ordination of will with reason, and so promotes the harmony of the two. But even more valuable than this is the rousing of sentiment, particularly the sense of brotherhood. The erratic or stubborn determinations of the will are generally solitary, and always selfish; and the appreciation of want which we can relieve, together with the delight of beneficence, profoundly antagonizes the solitary and selfish mood.

A still more deep and subtile result is the apprehension, rather by sentiment than by thought, of that divine order which embraces the lives of men. As we have seen, man is native to this. As he rises to higher development, he more and more appreciates the fitness and beauty of God's ways, and chooses them for his own. Now, the participation which Christian work gives in this divine order, the necessity of studying how others may be helped, and the satisfaction of finding that our efforts, rightly directed, are truly helpful, initiate the soul into the fellowship, divine and human, of the Holy Spirit. And this has a necessary permanence. He who has been a fellow-worker with God to the extent of understanding his own work, will find God's methods so wise and delightful that he will desire no others. All this may be said of another species of Christian work, — the wise ordering of one's own life. The restraint of appetite, the subduing of passions, the habitual substitution of tranquil satisfaction for boisterous delight, all accomplish the same double purpose of training the will to habitual rectitude, and of bringing the whole man more and more to love the ways of divine wisdom.

Association with the spiritually minded brings again before us the subject of the Church, but in an aspect which we have not yet considered. It has been stated

that the sense of Christian brotherhood means far more than similarity of belief or taste ; indeed, it may not include these at all. Brotherhood implies a lasting relationship which grows out of the common Father ; a tender sympathy which concerns itself with the best welfare of others ; a joyful communion which is more than casual intercourse, which over-rides and outlives differences, even of much importance, and has in itself an assurance of perpetuity beyond the mere voluntary relations of life. It is by virtue of this half-recognized bond that the Church has lived. So true is this, that the bond of brotherhood has prevailed even against a most mischievous error, which has plagued the Church from the apostles to our day, and which is in this connection so important that we must give it full consideration. .

The Christian brotherhood has asserted itself in every age in the strong desire of Christian unity. No day and no sect has been without this desire. But unity has almost always been expected in some visible form. To hold the same creed, to worship by the same ritual, to own the same ecclesiastical allegiance, have been supposed to be, singly or combined, the necessary method of unity. It might seem that the unvarying experience of eighteen centuries had sufficiently demonstrated the fallacy of such expectations, and yet the air is full to-day of similar efforts along

these same lines. But this conception is so wrong that if success were possible in this way it would be disastrous. Success would imply the identity of all in intellectual belief, or in sentimental responsiveness, or in the craving for personal liberty, or in all these combined. The argument under each of these three heads being identical, we may shorten, without obscuring, the discussion by confining our study to the first, which is by far the most prominent and important.

Clearly looked at, nobody expects all or many men to think exactly alike. But this fact has been obscured by attempts to formulate creeds in which all might join. These, however, always prove to be scanty just in proportion to their apparent success; and the result is a group of men who are as far as ever from thinking alike, but who, in consideration of things in which they agree, and which they hold to be important, are willing mutually to ignore the many other things in which they differ. And even these points of agreement are always so vaguely put as to admit different shades of meaning. So that the whole result is rather a testimony to the desire of harmonious union, than any real intellectual agreement. Now this is perfectly legitimate, and indeed necessary, as a device for enabling groups of men to work smoothly together; and so long as the formulas are understood to be temporary and voluntary, they are to be ap-

proved. The tendency, however, has always been to pronounce these creeds final and obligatory; and each new conclave propounds its latest statement of belief as if this at last were the very truth, and would escape the fate of all its predecessors. But history has no more constant lesson than the transient quality of opinion. It is not enough to see that these things are always so; a little study will show us that the welfare of the Church demands the failure of all attempts at intellectual uniformity.

For truth is many-sided and voluminous, and no man's point of view or capacity of observation suffices for all of it. Therefore, it is the order of our being that each shall supplement his neighbor, so that by mutual corrections and combinations there will come to be among men, and among groups of men, a much wider and more accurate knowledge of the truth than any man could either attain or securely hold alone. Besides, the divine purpose is concerned in this because it brings home to men their mutual dependence, and demonstrates, while it increases, the bond of human society. Now, within the Church this is especially true and important. It being granted that the Church at large, each church in the denominational sense, and each church in the local sense, must inevitably include many varieties of belief, we immediately see how the fact enlarges our opportunities. If only

the mistaken desire of uniform belief can be dispelled, and the fact accepted that true Christian unity rests upon the far deeper sense of brotherhood, differences being expected and welcomed, opinions being expressed without obloquy and compared without passion, each member must find his views corrected in details and broadened in general, "till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

During this process the unity of brotherhood already recognized is strengthened by these mutual contributions, being "compacted by that which every joint supplieth." This, it must be observed, is very far from "toleration," which is almost as destructive of true brotherhood as intolerance. It is the glad welcome given to each man's contribution, the eager sifting of all sands, that no gold may escape.

This discussion of beliefs has not been brought forward here to give them the first place, but, on the contrary, to suggest how that condition which has through the ages hindered the true brotherhood and made it unfruitful, may, in the secondary position which belongs to it, contribute to the strengthening and enlargement of the true life of the Church. This is love, the love of brotherhood, without which the tongue of angels, the solving of all mysteries, prevailing faith, and the martyr's stake are nothing. In such a brother-

hood the soul wavering between principle and temptation must find a strong assurance of virtue. The moral atmosphere, the keen delight in the things of God, the common worship, the love on every hand, which he could not choose to wound, all combine to educate the whole man, and to harmonize will with conscience.

Another form of such association is found in study of the Bible. The other relations of the Bible have been sufficiently discussed already; but we have still to consider the help it gives in the formation and establishment of Christian character. The whole range of history affords nowhere else such instances of moral strength, of intelligent virtue, of efficient manhood, in a word, of many-sided human greatness, as have appeared among those reared under the influence of this book. And this has not come of its use as a text-book, a code of morals, least of all as a manual of dogmatic theology. One may safely say it has come in spite of such uses overstrained. The great result has come from deep familiarity with the human life depicted and expressed in the Bible. The vast assemblage of noteworthy men who live in these pages, crowned by the supreme person of the Man of Nazareth, becomes to him who grows familiar with the Scriptures part of his own experience. Their char-

acters, their trials, their outbursts of triumph or despair, their virtues and their faults, above all, the sturdy faith in God and things divine which runs through every page, grow into our memory as if we had witnessed and shared them all.

And the effect upon ourselves is not like that of precepts learned or the discipline of a school; it is that growth of our own character which comes of familiar intercourse with great souls. As they erect themselves who look upon stately beauty, so the soul which consorts with this numberless company of worthies grows stalwart in its manhood, and reaches towards the perfect harmony of Christian character. If any proof of God's hand in the Bible be still needed, it may be found in this power which this book alone in all literature possesses, of installing itself among the springs of character, and working thence in men of every degree that inward harmony which is the purpose of God.

These agencies finally lead up to the third and most vital of all,—intercourse with God. As we take up this topic it is necessary again to insist that these formal divisions belong to the order of thought, and not to the facts as they occur. Intercourse with God in varying degree prevades the entire Christian experience. Work faithfully done, the associations of the Church, the

study of the Bible, all bring with them some consciousness of divine presence ; and, indeed, for some temperaments the latter may often seem the initial experience, bringing the others as its fruit. With this reservation, and because clear thinking requires an orderly sequence of topics, we now come to consider intercourse with God as if it were a separate agency of salvation. This intercourse may be occasional and designed, when it is prayer ; or it may be habitual, when it is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer takes innumerable forms, but its essence is one. It does not necessitate a form of words, nor a consecrated place, nor an intercessor. Nor does its essence lie in the purport of utterance or thought. The essential fact of prayer is the effort of the soul to communicate with a higher spiritual power. In this vague sense men have always prayed. The attempt seems as instinctive as the social instinct or parental care. It is, in fact, the way of access which God has ordained for himself to reach the human soul. It exists among the other facts of daily life, and its expression, of course, has relation to them. But it is additional to that discipline of life by which God slowly educates the race. And this brings to view a momentous fact which our previous studies may seem to have ignored.

While the world is visibly constructed for humanity

as a great whole, and while the usual processes of social and physical experience seem to act on each man only as he is part of the mass, yet each is in fact a unit within himself, and what is best in man is repressed and injured when he is treated as only a constituent of the race. The family, the school, methods of hygiene, political government, and many other experiences, bring this home to us. The divine government, of course, cannot ignore such a fact, and amid all that is general and social there remains to each man an open way of access to his Father, towards which each is impelled by this native instinct of the soul for prayer. A large part of the teaching of Christ is directed to this very thing. He labored by precept, by parable, by example, to draw out and develop in man the assurance of an ever accessible Guide and Helper. And all his work through the ages has striven to ally each soul individually with God, while it unites all in a universal brotherhood.

Now, for the Christian, prayer is the exercise of this birthright. He comes to God with whatever ceremonial, language, thought, the occasion may require. Thanks, supplication, confession, adoration, simple content, each or all form the burden of his prayer, which, however, no more depends on any one of them than does the intercourse of human friends need a special character of thought. The question, therefore,

whether God answers prayer is absurd. The asking is not the prayer ; and if we think of this as establishing a claim on God, or as turning him from his chosen way, we wholly miss the nature and purpose of prayer. When the soul striving towards God is conscious of the divine presence and has the sense of personal communion, its prayer is accomplished,—not answered,—and it has attained the supreme possibility of man,—association with God. Now, it must certainly result, and the world's experience proves the fact, that a human soul lifted even for a moment to this height, will be strengthened and ennobled. The mind grows clear, the imagination kindles, conscience quickens, the will turns to God. He who in weakness or in wavering has resorted to sincere prayer, finds new strength and opened vision.

Of course such experience will more and more repeat itself, till what was occasional becomes habitual. But here God's method with us interposes a wise constraint. It has seemed to men of many faiths, and not least to Christians, that life might well be resolved into a perpetual ecstasy of divine communion. How disastrous have been the attempts at this, it is not necessary to recite. The effort rests on a fundamental error. It conceives God as accessible to man, while yet man dwells in the flesh, by some other way than the familiar life of man. But this very life is

ordained to teach us the things of God; and they who withdraw from it in the hope of finding him are making in another form the familiar attempt to discover a better way than God's. Their conscience may approve the effort, and this may save it from condemnation as sin; but the fact remains that it is not God's way, and cannot succeed.

When, however, the intercourse of prayer reacts on the conduct of life, when all the temper and energy of the soul at its higher estate are bent to the wise following of God's way in daily duty and all the relations of normal living, then that is realized to which ascetics and devotees aspire in vain. The perfect example of life is found in Jesus Christ, and we may search the records of his life in vain for any note of flaming enthusiasm or ascetic devotion. He has no disparagement for the daily ways of men; he does not desire that God should recast the order of his world; he does not even need a new language of philosophical phrase and definition. His whole desire is that men should give their hearts to God, and walk the familiar paths with the consciousness of divine intercourse. This is full salvation; and the mingling of such lives is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

This completes such a survey as our subject seems to require, of the means, the method, and the results

of Christ's salvation. For the souls which come under its discipline it leaves no point untouched. But the more we are satisfied with such blessed help for ourselves, the more does the thought urge itself upon us of that vast multitude to whom Christ has been unknown upon the earth. We bring ourselves with reluctance to remember how very small a part of the immeasurable human aggregate, past and present, not to guess at the future, has any share which we can estimate in our inheritance. And as we recall the purpose of God, and confront it with such a vast necessity, the account which has been here given of the work of Christ may seem at the first view painfully inadequate. But the first view is superficial, and does not touch the heart of the matter.

The fundamental agency of God for bringing souls to himself is the experience of life, and from this none are or have been exempt. It is the pre-eminence of the Gospel that it illuminates this experience, brings forth its meaning, demonstrates its perfect work; that in this way it makes those whom it reaches not merely the objects of the divine purpose, as all are, but intelligent and eager fellow-workers in it. Now, if we ask, with this in mind, what the unchristian of every name still need in order that the experience of life may bear its fruit, the answer is that they need the knowledge of God and of his purpose towards them, the demon-

stration of human possibilities and opportunities which the Gospel gives, and the sense of fellowship with God and man in the Holy Spirit.

All that the experience of life can give in preparation for these they already possess; and what we know of the tenacity of memory and the persistence of spiritual impressions, leaves no room to doubt that the experience of life is a lasting possession, and may bring forth its full results whenever and wherever these spiritual graces shall touch it. The divine Artist may develop when he will upon his darkened plates the impress which the light of life has given them. Now that the intelligence of our time is discarding the crude expedient of dark ages, which solved the problem off-hand by sweeping all outsiders into promiscuous and endless doom, — a nightmare no less absurd than horrible, — the open possibilities of the future are seen to be sufficient.

We may conceive, in that other life which is still no other, the vast assemblage of souls who have left the earth, all-embracing, ever recruited. If the mansions of the Saviour's word may represent degrees of attainment, there must be many, indeed; but they are all in our Father's house, and through them all moves the beloved presence of the sinner's Friend. We need not strain our imagination to picture the new conditions of life, or intercourse, or work; but we may be

sure that whatever these conditions, they will be filled, beyond the measure of this world, with the love and the meaning of God. We may be sure, too, that all these souls, varying in every degree of attainment from the highest apprehension to the dullest wonder, will mingle in a conscious brotherhood ; that each will find others more proficient, who will delight to quicken his understanding of the past and awaken a responding love ; that it will be the high prerogative of every Christlike soul to seek those he can help, and, himself in his degree a little Christ, to urge forward the great salvation.

Nor can it be admitted that all this is conjecture. It is a reasonable anticipation of the working of powers with which we are certainly acquainted, to ends of which we have full assurance. And such a conception answers most completely the otherwise unsolved problem of the destiny of those who knew not Christ in their earthly life. Nor does this mean only the heathen and the wicked. We all come far short of that height which we may reach, and all need to look beyond the familiar experience for help and growth not realized here. We see through a glass darkly, we bear stunted fruits, we do not even know all our needs. But the knowledge of the present and the anticipation of the future unite and blend as parts of one divine process.

The one great fact never to be lost from sight, whether for practical use or the understanding of God's ways, is that he grasps us in a single unbroken purpose which takes hold of our entire being, while our imperfect thought, toiling after him, needs the artificial aids of system and analysis. But the process matters not if our thinking reach the end. Then we shall behold the boundless affluence of God pouring itself through all channels and across all obstacles, becoming all things to all men, disregarding in the perfect assurance of divine wisdom all the distinctions of men,—setting the first last and the last first, equaling the eleventh hour with the heat and burden of the day, casting down the mighty and touching the lips of babes with wisdom, caring not whether it be a day or a thousand years,—but, above all, and through all, and in us all, effecting his eternal purpose.

For the salvation of men is God's work. Our studies deal so much with man's limits of time, of strength, of wisdom, that we come to make man the standard of measure; whereas the great task which we survey, and in which each of us takes his little part, is God's task. The view which this book has presented aims to measure all by the greatness of God; and when we use this measure the only conclusion is the inevitable, entire success of the divine purpose. To this certainty all conceptions of difficulty must yield.

Whatever may seem to endanger this must be looked upon as doomed. The causes of ultimate results lie not in man but in God, who made man what he is. The extent of the process looks not to man's years, but to God's eternity. The outcome of all is to be, not man judged, but the purpose of God accomplished, — "that God may be all in all."

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